







# ENJOYING THE NEW TESTAMENT



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# ENJOYING THE NEW TESTAMENT

*By*

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AUTHOR OF "SEEKING FOR TROUBLE"  
"A BOOK OF UNLIKELY SAINTS"

WITH A FOREWORD BY THE  
REV. CUTHBERT LATTEY, S.J.

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## FOREWORD

BY THE REV. C. LATTEY, S.J.

CHRIST our Lord remains the best seller. We have had several proofs of this recently, if proof were needed: one may instance the great success of the broadcast and book of Miss Dorothy Sayers, *The Man Born to be King*, or Mr. H. V. Morton's books of biblical travel, or Archbishop Goodier's works upon the Saviour's life, death and resurrection.

This is looking at the matter from the purely literary point of view, which after all is a solid test of real interest. But the statistics of sales cannot be explained apart from more spiritual motives. Jesus Christ, having loved mankind so well, is loved as no mere creature has been loved before or since. How great a multitude, which no man can number, have wished to put His claims first and foremost, have professed sincerely that nothing should stand against them, have truly repented when they have found themselves contradicting those claims in matters great or small! How many in all the centuries have sought to live for Him alone, not merely without disobeying His commands, but in utter self-dedication to His holy Will? Their only cry to Him has been, "What do I still lack?" And when they heard that still small voice within their hearts, they have not turned away sorrowful, but have prepared themselves for fresh sacrifices of faith and love, and drawn from His cross fresh torrents of delight.

All of these and others besides have found their treasure where alone their heart could be satisfied, and have drawn waters with joy from the Saviour's fountains. They have longed to hear of Him whom their soul loveth, and have not been slow to turn to their joy and profit all

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that has been written well of Him. Christ our Lord remains the best seller.

No doubt He is well pleased with all our poor human efforts to explore His inexhaustible riches, and to bring them forth to enrich mankind, as He himself wishes so much that mankind should be enriched withal. Nevertheless we must bear in mind that He is the best seller, not as the subject-matter of a measureless and ever rapidly increasing library, but as Himself the author of the best account of all. He has left it behind Him, inspired and guaranteed by Himself, and to it we must turn first and foremost for our knowledge of Him. No human effort can ever supplant it. Such effort must rather be judged by the measure in which it sends us back to Him, in the letter as well as in the spirit. It is indeed the work of His Spirit not only to fill our souls with His own sweet presence, but to use for this very purpose the divine message which He has moved the apostles and evangelists to write. Even so He used the prophets and others of old to foreshadow what we now possess in the substance.

All Holy Writ is the word of God, but the New Testament evidently has an especial meaning and value for us, because it speaks to us directly of Christ, and no longer only in type or prophecy. No more praiseworthy task can be set for himself by human author than to make the New Testament known and loved; and it is easy to see how much remains to be done in this respect. For myself it is a pleasure, soon after the founding of the Catholic Biblical Association, to be asked to undertake something so consonant with its purpose as to introduce a book which should help many to understand and relish the New Testament.

Miss Monroe has already stirred up fresh interest in the saints by her lively and unconventional way of treating them; she now leads us to the Fount of all sanctity, and

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in a truly Catholic spirit bids us read His book about Himself with joy, in a veritable Feast of Weeks. If the Apostle in his inspired epistle bids us rejoice always, our joy must surely be full when we are reading what the Master has to say about Himself. But we must read and listen, not with mere superficial attention, but with heart and soul open to His words, realizing, as Our Lord playfully said of the entranced Mary, that no other human food can so satisfy the palate; we too must choose the best dish of all for our spiritual sustenance. Not that we must set even the inspired word of God against the Holy Eucharist, which is Life itself; no, we must not even separate them. The Apostle's ecstasy of union, "'Tis no longer I that live, 'tis Christ that liveth in me," stirs up the yearning that Christ should live within us, even in His Body. Within us, He disposes us to fulfil more perfectly His prayer to the Father that we may be one with Himself and the Father, with so sublime an ideal for that union as the very unity of the Blessed Trinity.

Thoughts so profound, and indeed all these God-inspired words, require more than mere reading, more even than such study as we can afford to bestow on them. To reap a hundredfold we must devote to them what the French (I think) call the *lecture méditée*, a reading full of thought and prayer, of pious aspiration and fervent resolution, such that not a particle of the good thing escapes us. To this also the work that follows will help not a little.

It is strange that those who whittle away the divine authorship, who resolve the books into somewhat muddy and questionable sources rather than drink from them the living water of divine life, should make their appeal to religious experience. Surely the appeal must go against them; they can know but little of the fervour and devotion of those whose simple faith embraces with love

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and gratitude all that their Heavenly Father has to give or tell them. Certainly it should not be difficult to tell at the present time where lies the best and highest religious experience; but it is based upon absolute faith, which it presupposes and confirms, but cannot prove. Almighty God does not command us to devote our life to mere experiments. Nor must the consolations of religion, when they come, be our aim and reward: "give me Thy love and Thy grace, for this is enough for me." This too is the spirit of the New Testament, and in this spirit, through the mercy of our Heavenly Father, we best enjoy it.

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THIS little book is offered to those Catholics who would like to read the New Testament, but who find the available literature a trifle beyond them. Its purpose is to serve as a stepping-stone to the better and fuller books which already exist. By making a selection only from the introductory material usually given, it is hoped to provide an easier access to the text itself. Once the New Testament itself has been read with enough appreciation to ensure enjoyment, the fuller books become interesting and intelligible in quite a new way.

For some time past, two great controversies have come between the Catholic laity and the Scriptures: the Protestant controversy, and then the long discussions and investigations set on foot to meet the rationalistic criticism of the Bible. This last, in the form of Modernism, tried to gain a footing within the Church itself. While these issues were being thrashed out, the laity had to stand aside, and that in their own interests. Now, however, the road is once more clear, and the highest authority in the Church invites us all to walk in it.

This double controversy has issued in a great enrichment of our Biblical learning, so much so as to be almost a third obstacle to the beginner, who is apt to suffer from *embarras de choix*. The fare set before him is bewildering in its variety. Moreover, at present even the simpler "introductions" devote a certain amount of space to discussions of controversial issues. Necessary as this is for those in touch with non-Catholic scholarship, it is something of a stumbling-block to those who want simply to benefit positively by the new discoveries that have been brought to light. Some even who might profit by the



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discussions are handicapped by lack of familiarity with the text discussed, that is, with the Scriptures themselves. Whether then people are ultimately to occupy themselves with controversy, or whether they will simply find in the Bible pasture for their own souls, there seems *to be room* for an attempt to put them more directly in touch with the text.

That a desire to read the Bible is on the increase among Catholics is obvious on every side. This stirring of interest is largely a response, on the part of the laity, to the invitation of several Pontiffs, who have expressed the desire that all the faithful should once more drink from the springs of Holy Writ. A phrase used by Pope Benedict XV, in the Encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus*, strikingly sums up this invitation: "Meanwhile it is Our desire that all the children of the Church should be inspired and strengthened by the charm of Holy Scripture, and so attain to the excelling knowledge of Jesus Christ." The *charm* of Holy Scripture. For most of us, our profit depends upon our pleasure. Reading the Bible is to be, for us, not a grim attempt to scale a crag, but a happy ramble in a friendly countryside from which we go away refreshed and, in the full sense, recreated.

This new interest in the Bible is further strengthened by some inkling of the new treasures which scholars have amassed. Hence, while there is a desire for access to the text with a minimum of preamble, there is also a desire for some preamble. This then is the excuse for the present work. An attempt is made to place the reader at the point of view whence he shall see, as nearly as possible, the same landscape as the writer of each New Testament book. This means seeing something of the public addressed, the emergency to be dealt with, the hopes, fears and perplexities of all concerned, and the steps taken to surmount them. Armed with this much of introduction,

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the reader is left to make his own discoveries, not expecting to understand every word he reads, but rather to catch the drift and see the relevancy of the treatment. He will be like someone taking a ramble through new territory, trying to familiarize himself with the principal features and the "lie of the land." Once that is done, he will be much better placed to assimilate any further information he may be moved to seek.

The plan, then, is to read the whole New Testament, as far as possible in whole books, though in certain cases only selections are recommended. Such cases are surprisingly few. For the most part, it has proved feasible to place the reader at a viewpoint whence he can see "the lie of the land" well enough to tackle a whole book without losing his way. No attempt is made to forestall every difficulty, if only because a certain amount of difficulty is a real factor in enjoyment. What is avoided is the kind of difficulty that kills interest and so destroys the desire to know more.

In order to build up a picture of life in the early Church, the books of the New Testament are proposed for reading mainly in the order in which they were written. Thus each emergency is met by the reader in the order in which it faced the writers. In this way tedious questions of date and background are taken "in our stride"; they present themselves as part of an enthralling picture, the unfolding life of the Church. History is thus acquired by easy stages, through sharing imaginatively in the perplexities of the first generation of Christians. The intimate relation between the Church and her Scriptures is the atmosphere which the student breathes during the whole time of his reading.

This chronological plan is not, however, adhered to pedantically. Other considerations have forced certain deviations. For instance, the Book of Acts is read first,

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of Christian history, which is one of our most precious supports. Their faith and hope were alike pure, resting direct upon God unbuttressed (as ours are) by centuries of experience. Our age is, however, loosening a number of props on which we have become accustomed to lean; so that for us one of the most valuable gains of Bible study is an insight into a phase of Christianity in which faith and hope received no propping from the human side, but were referred directly to God and God alone. Hence this intercourse with the first Christian generation is a matter of urgent import for ourselves. And not only with the great leaders. Many of us must recognize ourselves more in those humble rank-and-file Christians who flit through the pages of the New Testament; for they, with all their most human weaknesses, had yet given their all for the Pearl of Great Price.

My thanks are due to several friends whose enthusiasm for the project kept me from losing heart, not least certain nuns who allowed me to use them as a *corpus vile*, so as to try out the practicability of the method. But my chief debt is to the Rev. C. Lattey, S.J., who read the whole book in manuscript and parts twice, making a number of criticisms and suggestions which I have been happy to embody. He also provided the Bibliography; gave permission to quote from his "Chronological Table to the Book of Acts" in the *Westminster Version* of the New Testament, Vol. II; and completed his kindnesses by furnishing a Foreword. All this generous help has preserved the author from a number of blunders, and so offers security to the readers. At the same time, Father Lattey made no attempt to secure adhesion to his standpoint in controverted questions where other scholars, some of them his collaborators in the *Westminster Version*, take a different view from his own. Being unqualified to choose between such weighty opinions (they refer

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almost entirely to dates), I have ventured to fall back, as said before, upon a practical criterion: the convenience of beginners. While then the positions taken in this book have behind them the work of Catholic scholars, not all are Father Lattey's own, and the responsibility for choosing among authorities must lie, in the last resort, with the author. No vital point is ever in question; and perhaps, in a work of this character, it is an asset rather than a handicap that the author should so fully share the perplexities of the non-expert when faced with questions calling for *expertise*. The warm response of experts to any display of curiosity on the part of ordinary Christians is one of the best auguries for that awakening interest in the Bible which is a feature of Catholic life to-day.

MARGARET T. MONRO

Feast of St. Luke the Evangelist  
1943



# INTRODUCTION

## ABOUT USING THIS BOOK

THE purpose of this book is correctly described in the title. It is meant to help people to read the New Testament for the first time, and to find it an enjoyable experience. By "reading the New Testament" is meant reading it all, or nearly all; as distinct from reading selections, such as the Gospels and Epistles at Mass. And the object of the reading is to get an idea of the New Testament *as a whole*.

To grasp the whole of anything is usually an enjoyment in itself, besides doubling or trebling one's enjoyment of each of the parts. For much of the pleasure a thing can give us comes from the way it all fits together. The difference between good and bad taste in dress, for instance, is entirely a question of whether the outfit is a whole, to which every detail contributes. In the same way, a well-designed car or well-built house or a well-laid-out garden is a source of pleasure, for it is a whole which gives each of its parts a meaning and function it could not have alone. The same is true of all arts, including literature. The marvellous thing about the New Testament is that eight men could pen twenty-seven pieces of writing, in the course of nearly sixty years, and yet the result be a whole. That is because there was another Author concerned besides the eight men, no less than the Holy Ghost Himself. God is always a great Artist—you can see this by looking at any lovely stretch of country or at the sky by night. Hence when God gives us a Book, that Book is a real work of art, which is another way of saying a real Whole. The first step towards appreciating any work of art is always to try and

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see it as a whole. Therefore our *first aim* throughout this course is to see the Book God has given us as a whole.

Naturally, it will take a little time to do this, and time is a thing none of us has too much of these days. Therefore our *management of our time* is important. It would be a mistake, for instance, to spend so long over a book that caught our fancy that we had no time for another less obviously attractive; that might be like getting so taken up with the paint and papering of a house that we forgot the kitchen range and the wiring for light. We need to plan out our time so that we cover the whole ground without missing anything of importance. But the system we adopt will have to be an elastic system, easily adapted to individual needs. This is what is attempted by the division into "Weeks." The twenty-seven New Testament writings have been grouped into twenty-one "weeks." Strictly observed, this would get us over the ground in about five months. Allowing, however, for personal tastes—a little lingering here or there—and also for emergencies, 'flu, holidays, domestic crises and the like, it is better to think of it as a six months' course. That is about as long as a beginner can fruitfully spend on getting an idea of the New Testament as a whole, which is our main objective. It is hoped that this layout will be both elastic enough and systematic enough to get most people over the ground before they are tired of it, yet at the pace each one finds most comfortable.

The order in which we read the New Testament is important, especially the order in which we read it for the first time. It would not be a good plan to begin at the first verse of St. Matthew's Gospel and read right through to the last verse of the Apocalypse, for that would mean jumping backwards and forwards among dates and events till we were nearly giddy. Even the most painstaking explanations might never deliver us from such a muddle

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of mind. Hence we are as far as possible going to read the books *in the order in which they were written*. Thus we shall acquire our historical background step by step, for we shall be reliving in imagination the life of the early Church.

But this order is also treated with some elasticity. For one thing, we do not accurately know the date of every book in the New Testament, though scholars have done marvels in piecing the evidence together for us. Even so, some problems are unlikely ever to be settled, simply because there is no evidence that could settle them. Still, the main features are now reasonably clear. And that brings us to our second reason for elasticity: sometimes there are books which so clearly belong together that they are better read together even out of their strict time-order; it makes it much easier for us to see how they fit in. There is also a third reason—I have tried very hard not to give the reader a heavy assignment for two weeks running; if there was the slightest excuse for sandwiching an easy bit between two more strenuous ones, I have jumped at it; it has been a great boon sometimes not to know too exactly when a particular book was written! All the same, the main idea is to learn our history by reliving it in imagination. And that means taking it as far as possible in order of time.

Nearly every chapter ends with a suggested *Something to Think About*. This has a double purpose. One is to open up the week's reading. The other is to give an idea of methods of Bible study; for this reason the suggestions have been kept as varied as possible. From the start, we are looking ahead to what you will (I hope) want to do after you have finished this course.

For there is here no attempt to be exhaustive. This is meant to be no more than a ramble through a countryside where we think we might perhaps like to settle. We



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have our eyes open for the spot to build our house; or if that proves too much, our holiday bungalow. Should both plans fall through, we shall still carry away a number of memory pictures which will be an enrichment for the rest of our lives. Even if we never again undertake any regular Bible study, this course should make a difference to every Scripture passage we come across in the future; for we shall see it, not in isolation, but against the background of this countryside of happy memories.

### SOME PRACTICAL POINTS

**MAPS.** All study of the New Testament is enormously clarified by good maps. Those in most Bibles are rather small and niggly (though better than nothing). *Murray's Small Classical Atlas* is recommended (Ed. G. B. Grundy, price 7s. 6d.), and some of its maps can be had separately, such as Asia Minor and Palestine (price 2s.). If that is beyond us, a little ingenuity can beat up something. There are excellent maps in the New Testament volumes of Fr. Hugh Pope's *Catholic Students' "Aids" to the Bible*, in the volumes of the *Westminster Version*, and in the books of the Abbé Fouard. (See Bibliography for details.) You will probably find these in any well-stocked Catholic library. Mr. H. V. Morton's books, *In the Steps of the Master* and *In the Steps of St. Paul*, have useful outline maps as end-papers. The works of Protestant scholars often have excellent maps, and these might be found in public libraries. Look especially for books by Sir William Ramsay, who went and dug up many of the cities in Asia Minor which St. Paul visited. Pope Leo XIII thought so highly of his work that he sent him a medal.

Scholars differ somewhat as to the spelling of ancient place-names; hence atlases vary. It does not call for superhuman intelligence to see that Beroea is Berea; Kos or Coos is Cos; Joppa is Joppe; Perga is Perge, and so

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forth. (Personally, I suspect that the spelling *Perga* is an attempt to prevent English people from pronouncing the name "purge" instead of giving it its two syllables. Such are the traps in the scholar's path!)

**VERSIONS.** It is taken for granted that the reader will be using an approved Catholic translation of the New Testament, with notes, as the Church prescribes. What is usually given in such notes is not here repeated, as the reader is expected to have it in his hands already. All quotations in this book are from the Douay, but any approved version will do as well. There is the new American revision of the Douay, for instance; Mgr. Knox's version which we are awaiting; and the *Westminster Version*, which is translated from the Greek instead of from the Latin Vulgate, as is more usual with Catholic Bibles. Owing to the blitz, it is not possible to give more advice than this. If copies are not to be bought, a little persistence in begging and borrowing may work wonders.<sup>1</sup>

**DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES.** Since reading the Bible is itself an act of devotion, it is better not to clog it with much in the way of minor practices. An indulgence of 300 days can be gained for reading the Bible for a quarter of an hour, and a plenary indulgence if the quarter-hour's reading is carried out daily for a month. But it is better not to force ourselves into reading for a set time if less reading and more reflection is bringing us spiritual profit.

Our reading should always begin with prayer. The natural thing, when one thinks of it, is to invoke the aid of the Holy Ghost, the true Author of Scripture, and also of the human author whose work we are reading. And then it is only courtesy to end with a little act of

<sup>1</sup> After this was written came news that Catholic Bibles are in the press, to replace stocks destroyed in the blitz.

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thanksgiving for light and help received. The Epilogue of this book finishes with some verses from Psalm cxviii which may give ideas for our prayer before and after reading. In this simple way we can fulfil the ancient maxim: "Scripture must be read in the same spirit in which it was written." A humble, receptive frame of mind is essential.

**DIFFICULTIES.** It never did anyone any harm yet to discover that there are difficulties in the Bible: the real harm would be to fancy we understood it all. The mere fact that the Bible is a Divine book means that it must have much to puzzle our human understanding. The real marvel is that so much of it speaks home to us, giving support and enlightenment in the actual circumstances of our lives.

In feeling discontented with our powers of understanding we are in very good company. Even St. Peter admitted that he sometimes found St. Paul a little difficult! And since then a long series of Fathers and Doctors of the Church have confessed that Holy Scripture held for them many insoluble problems. We are thus in the Mind of the Church if, in the measure of our own much smaller attainments, we feel the same. In this as in everything else there never comes a time when Christians can begin to feel pleased with themselves. They get something much better than self-satisfaction—a growing knowledge of Him Who alone can satisfy. And that makes for self-discontent.

The best practical advice about difficulties is: Treat them like fishbones. Leave them at the side of the plate while you make your meal of the very much larger part which you can digest. Above all, never *gnaw* a difficulty, any more than you would gnaw a fishbone. Bones, as we have learned in war, have a number of important

uses, and in peace-time they may serve as manure for our fields. A thing is not useless because we do not know its use. There are things in the Bible which specialists find of great value for their work, though we cannot directly use them for our spiritual food. Our concern is with what has immediate and obvious food-value for our souls.

In any case, as we go along we shall find that some of our questions begin to answer themselves. Scripture is the great interpreter of Scripture; simply because the Book is a whole, the parts shed light on each other. The first thing then is to get an idea of the whole. Once that is done, everything you read in the Bible, or about the Bible, will help to clear up some of the things which at first seem puzzling.

**DATES.** A difficulty of a rather different order arises from the question of the dates of the New Testament. When it was written the calendar was in a considerably more rudimentary form than it is now. The length of the year was not known with complete accuracy. But the big difficulty was to keep track of years, since there was no single point from which all the nations of antiquity agreed to count. This lack was remedied by the Birth of Christ. Naturally, however, as long as the Church was persecuted this could not come into general use.

When then men came to reckon the year of Christ's birth, they were handicapped by the clumsy system of dating still in use, so they calculated it wrong. This is not surprising in a computation made more than five hundred years after the event (it was not calculated till about A.D. 557), for in the first century itself the Jewish historian Josephus got into a thorough muddle about the dates of Herod the Great. Modern scholarship has corrected Josephus—which may seem an odd thing to be sure about, but actually it is not very difficult. Modern

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scholars have two great advantages over the ancients. They have a really accurate calendar, and they have a bird's-eye view of ancient history. A writer in the sixth century knew less about the first than we do; and a writer in the first century had more difficulty than we in getting at facts that happened at some distance from himself.

Only quite recently have scholars discovered that the Romans held a census every fourteen years; indeed, it used to be urged against St. Luke that no such general census had ever been heard of. Now, however, we know that the date of Christ's birth lies between two years, either in the census of A.D. 5-6, or in that of 9-8 B.C., fourteen years earlier. The earlier date has some difficulties, but in the main fits in with other evidence. The date of the Crucifixion is harder to determine than the Birth, but it too is being narrowed down to a few possible years. Obviously it took place while Pontius Pilate was procurator of Judaea, from A.D. 26 to 36, and within that various years can be ruled out by a study of the Jewish calendar of feasts. The discussion is not yet concluded but A.D. 33 is at the moment a likely candidate.

Not one of the New Testament writers dated his writings, even by the clumsy system then in use. It was unnecessary for those to whom their teaching was in the first instance addressed. In working out the dates, our guides are tradition, indications given casually in the books themselves, and the general framework of the history of the period. Thus we know that Gallio, brother of the Roman philosopher Seneca, was proconsul in Corinth in the year A.D. 51-2, for this is settled by an inscription. This fixes one of the years St. Paul spent in Corinth, for he was brought before Gallio. Of course the dates of the various Roman Emperors are known, the dates of the Herod dynasty, and a number of others, notably the

## ABOUT USING THIS BOOK

destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. By dint of enormous patience, scholars have sifted out (a) the order in which the books were written—this is obviously a help towards dating, and (b) the most probable years. There are of course differences of opinion on both points, in matters of detail. But the substantial agreement reached is a more remarkable fact than the residue of unsolved problems.

As, however, there is still divergence of view among scholars, it was essential to decide what line to take in a book like this, which has nothing to contribute to the subject. There did not seem much point in involving the reader in the discussion, as it really only begins to become interesting *after* one has some idea of what is in the New Testament itself. The line taken therefore has been to select one list of dates, with good scholarly backing behind it, and give selections from this as an Appendix with a few notes on details. Through the kindness of the Editors of the *Westminster Version* we have been allowed to print the relevant extracts from the Chronology of the Book of Acts given in their Vol. II. The student will find other authorities taking other views; but this gives a good start-off which can later be modified by anyone who has the time, interest and capacity to do so.

**A LAST WARNING.** Reading this book is not the same thing as reading the New Testament, any more than glancing through a cookery book is the same thing as eating one's dinner! No one would ever make this mistake about their dinner, but it is surprising how many make it about the Bible. They read books about the Bible and leave the Bible itself upon the shelf. This little work is, however, meant for really hungry people not to be put off their dinner by any diet of words.



## ENJOYING THE NEW TESTAMENT

### *First Week*

#### GETTING UNDER WAY

THE great secret of reading the New Testament is to read it. This is not "being funny." It touches the nerve of our real difficulty, and our commonest mistake. The mistake is to think we need to know a great deal before we begin, and the difficulty then is simply to begin.

To anyone shivering on the brink and screwing up courage for the plunge, one piece of advice can be confidently offered: Begin with the Book of Acts. It is one of the world's great thrillers.

And read it like a thriller. Get up right now, look out your Bible, put a marker in at Acts, and take it for your *light* reading this week, instead of whatever it was you thought of buying. Put the Bible where you can easily pick it up in odd minutes, even if it is the kitchen dresser or the mending basket, and just go ahead and read Acts. Read it in snippets if you have to, but finish it this week. Actually, once begun, you will find it exceedingly difficult to stop. It is full of wildly exciting incident—prison, earthquake, shipwreck, false accusations, plots to murder, miracles, adventures up and down the road—a rattling good yarn if ever there was one. Read it simply for the story. Its author, St. Luke, is a prince of storytellers.

The only place where you *might* stick is St. Stephen's speech in Chapter vii. If you get bogged, just skip. Go on to verse 51 and finish from there. Though even this speech gets exciting if you remember that St. Stephen was on trial for his life, and instead of proving his own



## GETTING UNDER WAY

innocence he proved the guilt of his judges—a madly brave thing to do. Naturally the speech is something of a legal argument, so if you cannot catch on, don't worry, but skip and get on with the story.

One hint: look out for the places where the story suddenly changes from "they" to "we"—in fact, keep pencil and paper beside you and note the points, also when it changes back from "we" to "they." That word "we" tells us that St. Luke was present himself during the adventures he relates. He is a much more important person in the story than you would guess if you were not on the lookout.

***SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT.*** When you have finished your reading, amuse yourself with this question: For what reasons (enjoyment apart) do you think you have been advised to begin like this?

You will find the answer at the end of the book in Appendix A; but be a sport and try to work out your own ideas before looking it up.

And, by the way, get the pencil-and-paper habit while you are reading the New Testament. You will add to your enjoyment if you can note down things that strike you as you come to them, instead of having to search for them frantically afterwards.

# PART ONE

## GREECE AND ASIA MINOR

### I. GREECE AND ASIA MINOR

#### *Second Week*

#### THE FIRST EPISTLE

CAN you say straight off which was the first bit of the New Testament to be written? Unless you know, you cannot be expected to guess: it was the two Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians.<sup>1</sup>

How odd! Then why do they come last in his letters to Churches? Simply because they are the shortest. When St. Paul's letters were collected, the copyists began with the longest (Romans), then the next longest, and so on down to the shortest. Except for 1 and 2 Thessalonians, however, this method kept a rough historical order; the Epistles St. Paul wrote before his imprisonment in Rome come first (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians), while the Epistles written from prison (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and the letters to individuals), were all later in date.

**THIS WEEK'S READING.** The First Epistle to the Thessalonians.

*First*, refresh your memory about St. Paul's adventures in Macedonia (northern Greece) where Thessalonica was one of the chief towns; re-read Acts xvii. He had been bundled off in a hurry from Berea, and not until he reached Corinth was he rejoined by his companions, Silas and Timothy (Acts xviii. 5). The three of them then wrote to cheer the converts

<sup>1</sup> It is just possible that St. Peter's First Epistle was the earliest, but most scholars would agree to the above. The fact is that there is no decisive evidence about when 1 Peter was written, so it has to be fitted in where it seems to suit.

## THE FIRST EPISTLE

they had left in the north (1 Thess. i. 1). Silas is merely short for Sylvanus, as Tom is short for Thomas.

*Second.* Refresh your memory about St. Paul's companions. Silas comes on the scene in Acts xv. 40. When you read 1 Thessalonians look out for St. Paul's reference to the imprisonment at Philippi, which was then quite recent. Timothy, too, is first mentioned in Acts xvi. This young boy became one of St. Paul's dearest friends and most trusted helpers, whom he made Bishop of Ephesus and to whom he wrote his last letter on earth. In 2 Tim. i. 5 St. Paul names the Jewish mother and grandmother who had brought up the little boy to worship the True God, though his father was a pagan.

At the moment we are interested in, however, Timothy seems to have been kept on the run, carrying messages between St. Paul in Achaia (southern Greece) and the converts left behind in Macedonia (northern Greece). From the third chapter of the Epistle we gather that Timothy had already made the journey once, reported to St. Paul, and now was to carry this letter. Perhaps a young fellow could pass unnoticed where enemies were on the lookout for an Apostle. Perhaps since his father was a Greek he did not look Jewish and so could slip past under the noses of watchful Jews. Perhaps being the youngest, he was the best able to stand the fatigue of such frequent journeys. Travel was well organized in the Roman Empire, but much more tiring than to-day. Anyway, this picture of young Timothy dodging sentries (amateur sentries to be sure) helps to remind us that being a Christian at all meant a fairly exciting life in those days.

*Third.* Prepare your mind to read the very first words of the New Testament ever penned, the First Epistle to the Thessalonians.

Imagine the scene. It is less than twenty years<sup>1</sup> after the Ascension, and already Christianity has spread from Palestine to Syria, through Asia Minor, and across the sea into Europe. This letter was written to Europeans, though some of them were probably Jews domiciled in the city. When these Chris-

<sup>1</sup> Only seventeen, according to the chronology of the *Westminster Version*. Others make it about nineteen.

## THE FIRST EPISTLE

tians speak of "the Gospel," they mean the teaching given them by word of mouth, by St. Paul and other Apostles, or by their accredited representatives. "Scripture" means to them the Old Testament, in the Greek translation known as the Septuagint. Passages from this are read aloud weekly when they assemble to celebrate the Eucharist, especially the prophecies about the coming of Christ. Nobody yet has any idea that the Holy Ghost means to have any further Scripture.

Just now they are full of anxiety about their beloved Apostle, even though Timothy, as we saw, has been fairly run off his legs keeping them in touch. And St. Paul on his side is anxious about them, because he knows that the enemies who drove him away are persecuting the "children" he left behind. Timothy has brought him good news once, news of their constancy, and he is partly reassured. Now therefore he sends Timothy back, this time not only with a verbal message but with a letter. And at the end of the letter (second-last verse of the Epistle) he gives an order which was to have great consequence: "I charge you by the Lord, that this Epistle be read to all the holy brethren."

When would be a good time for the reading? Why, of course, on the first day of the week when everyone would be there for the Eucharist (for no one stays away from that). True, up till then only "Scripture," i.e. Old Testament, had been read aloud in the assemblies. But surely a letter from an Apostle is important enough to be read alongside "Scripture"! So word is passed round, and you can guess there was a full attendance. They can hardly give their minds to the ordinary reading and instruction. At last, the wished-for moment comes. Somebody—was it Timothy?—stands up with a long roll of papyrus<sup>1</sup> in his hands, and reads out the

<sup>1</sup> The papyrus reed, now extinct, then grew freely in the marshes of the Nile Delta, and yielded a pith which was used to make a writing material lighter and cheaper than vellum, a specially prepared leather which was bound up into paged books of the shape we know. Such a vellum book was called a codex. Codices were, however, expensive and heavy, and therefore papyrus was used for letters and accounts, and for cheap copies of anything. The early Christians were poor, and the papyrus had for them a further advantage—it could be rolled up and thrust into the clothing for easy carriage (there were no posts then for anyone

## THE FIRST EPISTLE

letter. And that was the first reading of an Epistle at Mass.

Now read the Epistle for yourself.

**TO THINK ABOUT.** During these early years of the Church's life, two main problems were exercising the minds of Christians. Naturally these two problems are often referred to in the New Testament, which was partly written to give the people then alive help and guidance in their actual worries. Both problems have been mentioned even in the small part of the New Testament we have read so far. One, however, is not mentioned in such a way as to make clear that it was a source of worry, so you may not be able to pick it out; still, you just might. The other is the main theme of the Book of Acts. Can you spot either or both of these worrying problems?

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but the Emperor). And in times of persecution a papyrus copy could be hidden in quite a small hole, when the police would easily have found a big codex. The New Testament in all probability circulated first as papyri, though when collections of the various books were made churches would of course try to afford themselves the more convenient and durable codices.

## I. GREECE AND ASIA MINOR

### *Third Week*

MARANA, THA!<sup>1</sup>—OUR LORD, COME!

#### The Second Epistle to the Thessalonians

WHAT is given in Appendix A as an answer to last week's question is necessary if we are to follow our reading this week. For we are concerned very much with the second of those worrying problems, though at a time before the worry had clearly developed. If Christians then worried over the Second Advent, it was only as we might over the idea of dying—it could trouble their consciences if they had been doing wrong, but it did not yet trouble their minds.

Indeed the first worry had nothing to do with their disappointment at the delay in Our Lord's return, but was something quite different. No sooner had St. Paul founded the Church at Thessalonica and gone on elsewhere than there followed false teachers upsetting the minds of his converts. In this case we gather they even brought a forged letter from St. Paul! (2 Thess. ii. 2). And the line these false teachers took seems to have been this: "Oh, you're waiting for the Second Advent, are

<sup>1</sup> This is our first encounter in the New Testament with a word which is not Greek, but Aramaic. Aramaic was a dialect akin to Hebrew, which was spoken in Palestine in the time of Our Lord. All His teaching was given in Aramaic, and at moments of intense feeling the Evangelists sometimes give us His actual syllables—"Talitha Cumi," for instance. The first book of the New Testament to be written at all was written in Aramaic, St. Matthew's Gospel. (This Aramaic original has not come down to us, so we are leaving it over till we come to the Greek translation.) It looks as if the first Christians made a kind of slogan of the Aramaic words which stand at the head of the chapter. There was nothing they so longed for as to see Our Lord again—or for the first time face to face. So they used "Marana, tha!" as a kind of pious ejaculation. St. Paul does not use the phrase in this particular Epistle, but it belongs to this circle of ideas and helps us to obtain the clue to them.

**MARANA, THA!—OUR LORD, COME!**

you? Why, you poor boobs, it has happened already. Christ has come and gathered His Saints to Himself. And *you* have been left behind!" No wonder the poor faithful Christians of Thessalonica felt dreadfully upset! But they did the sensible thing—they carried their troubles to their Apostle.

And the line St. Paul takes with them is interesting, for in substance he tells them that they ought to have been able to spot the false teachers for themselves. He says roughly: "If you had held on to what I had already told you, you would have seen that all this was nonsense. But as you didn't, let me run over again what I did tell you." Was not that encouraging? He told them in fact that they had in their hands the clue to tell false doctrine from true—all they had to do was to go by what they had already received from him. Thus armed, no one ought to be able to upset them. In other words, it was quite impossible for Christ to have returned already, partly because the Second Advent will be something public to the whole world, and partly because Christ said that a number of things had to happen first. Since those things had not yet happened, neither could the Second Advent have happened either.

If we compare 2 Thess. ii. with Our Lord's prophecies of the End of the World (e.g. Mark xiii), we shall see that St. Paul is simply repeating the teaching of Our Lord, though more shortly. After all, he had said it all to them before; he was only giving their memories a jog; he therefore summarizes instead of giving the exact words in full. This is one of several very interesting passages in the Epistles where St. Paul runs over bits of the Gospel story which he had been in the habit of telling his converts.

**THIS WEEK'S READING** then is Second Thessalonians, with a dip back to 1 Thess. iv. 2-v. 11. Here are a few points to help us to enter into what we read.

## THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

At first sight, the biggest difference between the first Christians and ourselves is that, where we prepare for death, they prepared to meet Our Lord at His Second Advent. The Apostolic teaching is that the just who are alive at the Second Coming will not have to undergo the death of the body, but will be transformed by the very sight of Our Lord Himself. We need to try to grasp this to enter into the minds of the first Christians. For it does strike us as odd that a Christian should ever have thought of himself as a man who might never have to die—Christ might come first, and then, instead of dying, His followers would be changed into His likeness. This is of course still the teaching of the Church—that Christ will come to judge both the living and the dead. But it has faded from our imaginations, whereas it was vividly in possession of the imagination of the first Christians. St. John sums the matter up in beautiful words: "Dearly beloved, we are now the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him: because we shall see Him as He is" (1 John iii. 2). And in 1 Cor. xv. 51-4 we find St. Paul saying the same.

Though our first feeling is one of surprise, second thoughts show that really we and they are one. After all, the first Christians, like ourselves, were walking in the light of the Four Last Things. To realize this helps much in getting over our first feeling of strangeness at their way of talking about it.

Another point of fellow-feeling is this. All through the New Testament there is an insistence that before Christ returns Antichrist will come and set going the most terrible persecution in all history. Therefore when the first Christians prepared themselves for the Second Advent, they also prepared themselves to face persecution.

Hence whenever times are dark, whenever great persecution has broken out, Christians have at once felt by instinct their kinship with the early Church and so with these obscure parts of the New Testament. That is because these passages, in a very profound way, go to the roots of the age-long battle of good and evil, darkness and light. Whenever that battle reaches an acute phase, so that it looks as if evil were about



## MARANA, THA!—OUR LORD, COME!

to triumph, these passages help us to interpret what is going on around us. And so they give us *hope*. But just as the first Christians made a little blunder (not a very big one) in thinking that Christ must be coming back during the lifetime of the Apostles, so later Christians have been apt to mix a little blunder with their true and wise sense that these prophecies are full of meaning, especially in ages of triumphant evil. They jump to the notion that this or that must be the end of the world—the Fall of Rome, for instance, or the victories of the Saracens and Turks, or the Reformation, or the French Revolution, or the Russian Revolution, or Hitlerism.

The reason for this mistake is not very difficult to see. The Bible tells us much more about the character of the kingdom of evil than about how God will deliver His people from it. And behind that again is a reason, or several reasons. Evil is uninventive; God is inventive. This was what people meant when they called the devil “the ape of God”; the devil is always, so to speak, borrowing ideas from God. Because he never can catch up with God, he is left copying the last thing God did, or taking precautions against it. Whereas God each time carries out something entirely new and unexpected.

So it comes that, when men revolt against God, they repeat the same old tricks. Naturally then the final revolt against God will have much in common with all the earlier partial revolts—and that we live in such an age of revolt against God is obvious. By contrast, every one of His deliverances is something which never occurred to anybody, such as Christ’s coming to earth as a helpless Baby. Hence every great deliverance in history has about it something of the “thief in the night”; it was the last thing men were looking for. And God’s final deliverance from the final revolt—for He promises there will be a deliverance—remains something we can as little foresee as men foresaw the birth of Christ. We know that something will happen, because God has promised it shall. But we cannot make a picture of it beforehand.

And out of this inability to make a picture God has given us one great good: our attitude in this matter has to be one

**THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS**  
*of faith.* We cannot see our way; thus we are led to put all our trust, not in our own wisdom and foresight, but in God and His Providence.

Hence though these prophetic passages are confusing in many ways they are dead plain at one point. It is not God's will that we should ever know for certain when Christ will come, or even when He is likely to come. The Second Advent will seem unlikely when it happens, just as the First Advent did, and many other deliverances which God has wrought for His people.

We are thus never to know when Christ is coming for us, whether He comes privately to fetch us at our death, or publicly to fetch us at the Second Advent. We are to live our whole lives as if either event might happen any minute. Our Lord summed the whole matter up when He said: "What I say to you, I say to all: Watch" (Mark xiii. 37).

**TO THINK ABOUT.** Why are these passages about the Second Advent so valuable to-day for people interested in social reform?

# I. GREECE AND ASIA MINOR

## *Fourth Week*

### NEW CHRISTIAN AND ANCIENT JEW

#### The Book of Acts again

**THE PROBLEM.** Must a Christian first become a Jew? At first sight it looks like a made-up question, something that can never have been real for anybody. But what we have read so far shows that it was once the question of questions for Christians, so tricky that it took them years to find the final solution. Indeed, God had to give them a fair amount of extra help, in the way of visions, before they did find the solution. Just because it was final—that is, completely satisfying—the question now looks to us unreal. It is cheering to reflect that some of the things that press on our minds to-day may look equally unreal to our descendants! But only of course if we are as persevering as the first Christians in looking for the one right answer.

This week we are going to re-read Acts, or as much of it as we can manage, not this time for the incident, but in order to disentangle the main thread of the story. That thread is just this question of the relation between God's revelation through Moses and His revelation in Christ. For the heart of the problem is that the religion of Israel was genuinely *given by God*. As St. Paul says (Rom. xi. 29): "The gifts and the calling of God are without repentance." God could not simply take back what He had once given, for if He did He would not be God. Yet His new gift had made the old one out-of-date. How reconcile the two?

Thus there is a real problem, and one that was only

unravelling knot by knot. The gist of the unravelling was twofold: *First*, God had given Israel both a revelation of permanent truths, and a lot of wrapping to preserve those truths from contamination. Now that He had completed the body of truths He intended to reveal, the wrapping could be safely removed. Chief of this wrapping was the special status of Israel as a nation, and all the network of purely national custom which had shut the Jews off from the pagans in order to preserve their faith in its purity.

*Second*, much that God had made known to Israel pointed forward to a fulfilment when the Messiah<sup>1</sup> should come, not only the prophecies but the whole system of sacrifices. Now that Messiah had in fact come, prophecy and sacrifice had passed into their fulfilment, as the seed passes into the plant. Thus nothing that God had given Israel was lost; even in being superseded it was fulfilled, that is, carried to its completion.

**THE PROGRAMME.** In Acts i. 8 we find Our Lord Himself giving the Apostles their programme: "You shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth." These words give us the *stages* by which the story in Acts develops. Keep paper and pencil handy while you are reading, and outline roughly what happened under each of these headings. The first ones will be quite short, but they grow longer. Indeed, the last one is still going on.

Quite probably the Apostles did not instantly catch Our Lord's full drift. The Jewish nation was scattered through the whole extent of what was then the known world, so that witnessing "to the uttermost part of the earth" might have suggested only preaching in all the Jewish synagogues in the Roman Empire. That they

<sup>1</sup> See note at end of this chapter.

were to go right outside the synagogue to the heathen did not at once dawn on them. And the way Our Lord opened their eyes by stages is one of the most fascinating pieces of Divine education which we can trace out.

Broadly speaking, He gave them a half-way house to the main difficulty by His treatment of the Samaritans. These were a kind of heretic or schismatic Jews, and though the real Jews hated them, it was just possible to see that they had some claim. After all, they kept the whole Law as given in the Five Books of Moses. Besides, Our Lord had given a fairly plain lead Himself through His own dealings with the Samaritans. Thus He had already gently loosened some of their prejudices and led them to take the first step towards a really universal religion. After they had conquered their prejudices about Samaritans, it was considerably easier for them to see the case for the rest of the world.

Even so, it took a lot of hard thinking for them to realize that non-Jews could enter the Christian Church on an exact par with Jews. Both must be baptized; but the pagans did not have to be circumcised as well. How this was worked out is one main theme of Acts.

**THE HUMAN GROUPS.** Some notes on the various groups of people we shall meet in Acts may help us to follow the thread.

*The Samaritans.* In the heart of the Jewish country, dividing the northern province of Galilee from the southern province of Judaea, was this settlement of people of mixed race, dating from the first great deportation of Israelites from their own land. We have all heard of the Babylonish Captivity; but there was an earlier one, the Assyrian Captivity. The Israelites were at that time divided into two kingdoms, the northern being Samaria and the southern Judah. The Assyrians conquered

Samaria<sup>1</sup> and deported many of the population. They then brought in deportees from others of their conquered territories. In the interval the land had largely gone back to the wild, so that there was a regular plague of wild beasts. The newcomers, fearing they had offended the God of the land, sent to the neighbouring kingdom of Judah for a copy of the Law of Moses, which they translated into their own language. A very ancient copy of this Samaritan Pentateuch is still in existence at Nablus (anciently Samaria) in Palestine. The new population, however, did not go up to Jerusalem for the feasts, but proceeded to carry out the sacrifices on a mountain in their own country. Meantime the Assyrian Empire fell before the Babylonians, and the Babylonians besieged and captured Jerusalem, deporting its population in their turn. After seventy years these exiles were allowed to return and rebuild Jerusalem and its temple. At first the Samaritans tried to join them, but the Jews refused to have anything to do with them.

This was the beginning of a feud still bitter six hundred years later, in Our Lord's day. When the Jews wished to insult Him, they could think of nothing worse to say than "Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil" (John viii. 48). Devout Jews, going from Galilee to Jerusalem for the Feasts, often preferred to make a toilsome detour, sooner than take the straight road through the Samaritan country. There were two reasons for this. (a) The hostility of the inhabitants who, if they did not attack, at least fiercely refused hospitality to Jewish travellers—we get an instance of this in Luke ix. 52-6. And (b) they risked ceremonial defilement which would have disqualified them for taking part in the worship in Jerusalem. The

<sup>1</sup> In the Old Testament, Samaria is the name of both the district and its capital city. In the New Testament it is mainly used of the district alone.

detour had its drawbacks likewise. Not only was it long—it meant crossing the Jordan south of the Lake of Galilee, travelling down its east bank, and recrossing opposite Jericho—but it entailed facing the perils of the robber-haunted road to Jerusalem. All this explains why the Apostles were so astonished when Our Lord insisted on going through Samaria. (John iv. 4.)

That whole passage should be read, down to verse 42. It is the famous story of the woman at the well, and seems to have been Our Lord's longest stay in the Samaritan country. He had a warm welcome, at first through the good offices of the woman, later because of Himself. Here too we get the clue to Our Lord's attitude to the Jew-Samaritan feud. He held that the Jews were right in point of fact: "Salvation is of the Jews." So long as the Old Law was operative it was at Jerusalem that sacrifices ought to be offered. But He also pointed out that, since He had come, this distinction no longer applied; the question of *where* to worship God no longer arose, since all now were to have access to Him who is a Spirit. This is, in principle, the same solution that St. Peter and St. Paul are found working out, when faced with the Jew-pagan question which so deeply exercised the first Christians. Though St. John tells us the beautiful story of the Woman at the Well partly for its own sake, he was also in part backing up colleagues who had been fiercely attacked for this very thing. He was showing that the principles to which St. Paul appealed could thus be traced to Christ Himself. As St. John accompanied St. Peter on a very successful mission to the Samaritans (Acts viii. 14) begun by St. Philip, he had good chances of knowing the inner history of the conversion of Samaritans to the Gospel of Christ.

Another passage in the Gospels which sheds light on the subject is the cleansing of the ten lepers, when only

one, and he a Samaritan, turned back to thank Our Lord. (Luke xvii. 12-19.) And of course it was a shrewd thrust at Jewish prejudices to make the hero of a famous parable a Samaritan. (Luke x. 25-37.)

Our Lord had thus given the Apostles a strong lead, which we see them intelligently following up, when persecution drove them for a time from Jerusalem. He had prepared their way by His own mission in the Samaritan country and also by a consistent attitude whenever circumstances gave Him an opening. Having put the clues into their hands, He left them to further providential circumstances, to their own good sense and fidelity, and to the guidance of the Holy Ghost, to follow those clues a stage further.

*Greeks.* As used in Acts, "Greek" does not necessarily mean Greek by race, but people who adopted the Greek language and culture. Many, both pagans and Jews, had done this, and this widespread use of a single language played a very important part in the early spread of Christianity. We can appreciate this by contrast with modern missions, where in some places a missionary has to spend much time and energy on learning several languages before he is of much use in quite a small region. Part of God's preparation of the world for the Incarnation was the general adoption of this remarkable language.

In Acts then, "Greek" may mean (a) a Greek by birth; or (b) a pagan of other race who had adopted the Greek language and way of life, like the father of Timothy; or (c) a Jew who had done the same, save for the necessary observances of his religion, like St. Stephen.

The appointment of deacons in Acts vi was directly due to friction between some of these groups among the Christians of Jerusalem. There was much come and go among the Jews of the Roman Empire. Hence children



of Jewish parents, born abroad where they had picked up Greek, had returned in such numbers to Palestine that there had to be special synagogues<sup>1</sup> for them where the Scriptures were read in Greek. Some of these synagogues for foreign-born Jews are mentioned in Acts vi. 9. The "Libertines" means the "liberti" or freed slaves, of whom there was a vast number in Jerusalem and who again had their own synagogue. In vi. 1 the "murmuring of the Greeks against the Hebrews" means friction between Christians drawn from the Palestinian Jews who spoke Aramaic, and the Christians drawn from this foreign-born element who had picked up Greek manners and language abroad. In general, when the New Testament speaks of the "Hebrew" language, it means Aramaic, a kindred dialect which had displaced Hebrew as the language of the people. These language changes had forced the Jews to translate or paraphrase the Old Testament both in Aramaic and, as we shall see in a minute, in Greek.

Note: Some translators and commentators try to distinguish the Greeks by race, the Greek-speaking pagans, and the Greek-speaking Jews, by using such words as Grecian, Hellene, Hellenist, and so on. No single set of terms has yet satisfied all scholars. The important thing is to realize what it is they are trying to label; then we can follow easily enough whatever set of labels is chosen.

*The Dispersion* (called in some books the *Diaspora*, which is merely Greek for the same thing). "Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles?" asked the Jews once

<sup>1</sup> The synagogue worship dates from the Babylonish Captivity. Cut off from the Temple, the exiles gathered on the Sabbath (the holy day under the Law of Moses) for prayer, Scripture reading and instruction. After the return from exile, this type of worship was continued, because of its excellent results as a means of teaching the people. It was a new departure in human history, and gave rise to a new kind of building, one in which a large congregation could gather for religious worship. These buildings were called synagogues, a Greek word meaning simply "assembly" and so "place of assembly." The synagogue worship strongly influenced Christian worship; the Mass of the Catechumens is still an instructional service on the model of the synagogue.

about Our Lord. (John vii. 35.) These "dispersed" are in the main the same as the Greek-speaking Jews already mentioned, though some of them had adopted other languages as well: the crowd at Pentecost, for instance, consisted of Jews who had come to Jerusalem for the Feast, and to their astonishment heard the Apostles speaking the languages of their countries of residence. (Acts ii. 6-11.) If we recall the narrative of Acts, we shall realize that the "dispersed" played a decisive part in the spread of the Gospel.

This dispersion dated in part from the Exile in Babylon, as not all Jews chose to return to their own land. Later, other dispersions took place, so that in the time of Christ and the Apostles, large numbers of Jews were established in all the great centres of trade. They observed the Law, and as far as possible came to Jerusalem for the Feasts. One enactment of the Law of Moses was that every male was to appear before the Lord three times a year. Those resident abroad could not be as regular as the Jews of Palestine, but they did their best. There was a service of pilgrim ships for them—it was probably these regular sailings which made possible the plot to murder St. Paul which St. Luke so briefly dismisses in Acts xx. 3. Though this story does not look like it, the "dispersed" were on the whole less fanatical than the Jews of Palestine, simply because they knew something of the good things in Greek culture. St. Paul, who was born in the great commercial city of Tarsus, was able to quote from a Greek poet when speaking to highly educated Greeks in Athens. (Acts xvii. 28.) The Jews of Palestine despised the Dispersed for this interest in pagan life, while the Dispersed were irritated by what they regarded as the narrowness of the Palestinian Jews.

For the Dispersed, the Old Testament had been translated into Greek, the version called the *Septuagint*, and it

was this Greek version which had made the Jewish Scriptures widely known among pagans. There are some interesting traces of this influence. Thus it is possible that the Latin poet Virgil had heard the prophecy of Isaias about the Virgin's Child; and when the literary critic Longinus wanted an illustration of "the sublime" he quoted Gen. i. 8: "God said, Let light be; and light was." When the New Testament writers quote the Old, it is generally this Greek version which they have in mind. The exception is St. Matthew, who shows more familiarity with the Hebrew.

The Dispersed had their synagogues in every considerable city of the Roman world. If St. Paul found no synagogue in a town, it was either a third-rate sort of place, or else it was important for something other than trade. Thus Philippi, though an important town, was a settlement of Roman soldiers after their service was ended; it seems to have offered little to trade, for the Jews had no more than a prayer place by the river. (Acts xvi. 18.) At Athens we get a lively picture of how a speaker in the synagogue could gain attention in other circles in the town—though in this case St. Paul seems to have made his own opportunities by preaching out of doors. In most cases, however, he seems to have stuck to the synagogue until he was pushed out. These Greek-speaking synagogues everywhere gave him his first platform, of which he made full use. The Jews had a habit of inviting distinguished visitors to address the congregation (Acts xiii. 15), and St. Paul, as a pupil of the great Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts v. 34-9 and xxii. 3) could trust to being asked if he had anything to say. It is doubtful if early Christianity could have made such rapid headway—it had reached Europe within twenty years—had not the Dispersed thus provided it with a set of bridges or stepping-stones already in place.

*Proselytes.* The more thoughtful among the pagans had long been attracted to the Jewish religion, rightly recognizing it as a higher and purer faith than any other with their reach. At the same time, Jewish exclusiveness and contempt for other races tended to put pagans off. There were, however, a number who were willing to pass this barrier for the sake of truth, and if they desired they could become members of the Jewish Church. These were called *proselytes*, and there were various grades of them, according to how much of the Law of Moses they undertook to observe. Some, but not all, received the rite of circumcision.

Besides the proselytes, there were a sort of "associate members" in Jewry, variously called "devout men" (Acts viii. 2) or "God-fearers" (x. 2) who attended the synagogue, worshipped the One True God, and conformed to some of the moral and ceremonial requirements of the Law. Serious-minded women, to whom paganism offered nothing but idle frivolities, were particularly attracted to the synagogue worship. At Antioch of Pisidia we find the Jews stirring up "the religious and honourable women" to make trouble for St. Paul (Acts xiii. 50).

On the whole, however, the Gospel was welcomed by the proselytes whom St. Paul found attached to most synagogues, welcomed simply because it was free from the irritating exclusiveness of Judaism. Titus Justus at Corinth (Acts xviii. 7) seems to have been of this class; and Lydia, the purple-seller<sup>1</sup> of Philippi, who kept up her observances even in a city where there was no synagogue to support her in devotion. (Acts xvi. 12-15.)

<sup>1</sup> The dye from a sea-snail, plentiful near Tyre, was in much demand through the Roman world. Hence there was a big trade in "Tyrian purple"—which we should call bright scarlet—both the dye and the dyed stuffs.

*The Need for Tact.* We can now see why the Apostles had to move with tact, where principle was not clearly involved. On several occasions we find an attempt to mollify the Jews by observances not clearly wrong. Thus we find St. Paul circumcising Timothy (Acts xvi. 8); and later trying to counter false charges of subverting the Law by performing certain Jewish rites on the advice of the Christians of Jerusalem. (Acts xxi. 17-29.) This tact was but seldom crowned with success; it became more and more clear that a solution did not lie in that direction. Only a clean break would serve to preserve the universal character of Christ's religion.

The outstanding example of this tact is the decision of the Council of Jerusalem. As St. James put it: "Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him in the synagogues, where he is read every sabbath" (Acts xv. 21). Hence the recommendation that converts from paganism should observe certain of the most widely known of the Jewish customs. After all, it was confusing to have two religions in the field, both claiming to be revelations from the same God! Charity required that the confusion be kept as small as possible.

*The Roman Government.* The Jewish religion was recognized by the Roman Government, in accordance with the general Roman policy, which was to tolerate the local and national cults found in occupation. Indeed, the Roman attitude towards Judaism was more one of active protection; for the Government found the Jews useful, and wished to keep them in good humour. The Jewish leaders in Palestine were able to put the screw on Pilate, because he had flouted the Imperial programme of protective tolerance towards the Jewish religion, and so could not afford an inquiry into his conduct.

This created a special problem for the Christians: if

they lost status within Judaism, they could no longer claim the protection of the law. The Roman Law had no place for non-national cults, regarding them with suspicion as, if not treason, at least a nursing ground for treasonable plotting. Hence a break with Jewry put the Christians under a grave disadvantage.

Their way of arguing their case which we find in Acts shows how they felt about it. They made every effort to prove that it was really they who were loyal to the Jewish religion, since it was they who recognized the fulfilment of its prophecies. If they could get a legal decision in this sense, they would have nothing more to fear from the Government. If the decision went against them they would become outlaws. Right up to the end of the Book of Acts (about A.D. 61) the question was undecided.

*The Jews.* Christians were not of course moved only by practical considerations of this kind. The first Christians, Jews themselves, were deeply moved by the tragic spectacle of their nation's refusal of the crown of its history. For the sake of their "kinsmen according to the flesh" they strove to win recognition of Our Lord as the promised Messiah, the Hope of Israel. The Jewish rejection of Christ is the most calamitous thing in all history, and the New Testament is full of a sense of this tragedy.

For centuries God had been training the Jews for this one moment of opportunity—and when it dawned they refused the fence. They had taken up a wrong attitude towards their privileges. God had indeed made them the recipients and guardians of His revelation, so that, until Christ came to fulfil it, their religion was the highest truth known to mankind. In order to defend that revelation from contamination by pagan customs, it had been

wrapped up in a mass of Jewish national customs. Alas, these national customs had become a bristling fortress-wall designed to keep others out, and behind that wall it had been only too easy to forget that their treasure was a trust for all mankind. Instead of being humbled by their privileges, they had been puffed up with pride. Hence they failed in the moment of testing.

**THIS WEEK'S READING.** If possible, re-read the whole Book of Acts, keeping pencil and paper by you to trace out the main thread. If pressed for time, *omit* the following chapters: v, xii, xiv, xix, xx, xxvii.

**TO THINK ABOUT.** In the early part of Acts, the chief figure is the Prince of the Apostles, St. Peter, and it is he who takes the decisive step in the admission of pagans by baptizing the centurion Cornelius. But St. Peter had the care of the whole Church upon him, and this particular problem was becoming a whole-time job. God then raised up a man specially qualified, St. Paul, to devote his entire energies, in co-operation with St. Peter, to this one task.

What specially qualified St. Paul for this task (a) as to his character, and (b) as to his circumstances, such as education and social position?

**Note: THE MESSIAS**

All through the Old Testament, from immediately after the Fall and the expulsion from Eden, we find God making a series of promises to send a Deliverer. This promise was made first generally to mankind. Then it was narrowed to the descendants of Abraham. Of the twelve tribes descended from Abraham, one, the tribe of Judah, was chosen. In Judah, one family, the royal house of David, was further chosen. But while in one sense the Promise was thus narrowed to a single line of descent, in another it grew broader and more detailed—the Deliverer was to unite, in some supreme fashion, the functions of Prophet, Priest and King. These three were all consecrated to their office by anointing with oil; hence the Deliverer was more and more referred to as **THE**

## THE BOOK OF ACTS AGAIN

ANOINTED, which in Hebrew is *Messias*. When the Gospel spread among the pagans this title was translated by the Greek word for "anointed"—*christos*, from which we get Christ. This is not a personal name but a title. We should remember this more easily if, as the French do, we formed a habit of speaking of "the Christ." When the Apostles proclaimed "Jesus is the Christ," they meant "He is the promised Deliverer, anointed by the Holy Ghost Himself to the supreme office of Prophet, Priest and King."



## I. GREECE AND ASIA MINOR

### *Fifth Week*

#### CHILDREN OF THE FREEWOMAN

##### The Epistle to the Galatians

"FREE" and "freedom" are among St. Paul's great words. The Epistle to the Galatians, which we shall read this week, marks a critical phase in his battle for freedom.

Exactly when it was written is a matter of some disagreement, save that it was several years after the two Epistles to the Thessalonians. One school thinks it was written from Ephesus, before the Epistles to the Corinthians; another that it was written after 1 and 2 Corinthians, at the same time as the Epistle to the Romans, that is, just before St. Paul's last fateful journey to Palestine. The reasons for and against need not concern us at this stage. We are taking it first among St. Paul's major writings because it is, in many ways, the best introduction to his dominant ideas. We shall understand Corinthians better if we have read Galatians first, for it helps us to understand what the row at Corinth was all about. After all, the Corinthians had probably heard it all from St. Paul by word of mouth. We have not, so we have to fill in the gap by reading that one of his letters which gives us the best lead.

At any rate, some time in the course of his travels, either about A.D. 49 or about A.D. 57, St. Paul received disquieting news of his converts further east: an attempt was being made to subvert them like that made in Thessalonica, but more serious. The news came from the central part of Asia Minor, then called Galatia, where, if you remember, St. Paul had had a very successful

## THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

mission. (Refresh your memory about his adventures in Lystra, Iconium, and Derbe in Acts xiv.) The trouble-makers were a party who may conveniently be called the Judaizing party, or the Judaizers, since they held that the Law of Moses in its entirety was binding on all Christians; Gentiles must therefore be circumcised before they could be baptized. Some of these had followed in St. Paul's tracks, and were engaged in upsetting the minds of his flock. The Galatians seem to have been a simple-hearted race—and it must be allowed they had no reason to suspect those who came to them in the Name of Christ. They listened meekly to what they were told with such apparent authority.

St. Paul's letter to them shows his agitation. He often had to write Epistles in order to find fault, but as a rule he led off with a long passage about the virtues he could praise in his correspondents. This time he was so upset that he dashed straight into the main subject, after the briefest salutation which good manners allowed. In the sixth verse he gets to business without further beating about the bush. And at the end, there are none of the affectionate messages to individuals which we find in most of his Epistles. He was too upset. The whole cause of Christian liberty was at stake.

*His Apostolic Authority.* There was a second issue. The Judaizers had called in question his authority as an Apostle. This attack on St. Paul's standing as an Apostle, which continued through many years, gained colour from the fact that he had not known Our Lord on earth; we shall find it more fully dealt with in the Epistles to the Corinthians. In writing to the Galatians, St. Paul takes a more personal line: he relates a bit of his past history which St. Luke "telescopes" in the Book of Acts. (St. Luke was rather given to "telescoping.") Besides,

Acts was written a good deal later than Galatians, so St. Luke may have felt that there was no need to waste expensive writing materials on what St. Paul had already put on record himself. Another reason likely to operate is that, after St. Peter's release from prison—probably in A.D. 48—St. Luke avoids mentioning him again; we shall see why when we come to St. Peter in Rome.

*Autobiography.* This is the first of several autobiographical passages which we shall meet in St. Paul's writings. It runs from Gal. i. 11 to the end of chapter ii, and fills out the story of what St. Paul did with himself immediately after his conversion as related in Acts ix. 1-30. Another gap is that Acts xi, though it tells of St. Peter's visit to Antioch, omits his encounter there with St. Paul. There is a certain magnanimity in St. Peter accepting such plain speaking from a late recruit, not only to the Apostolic college but to Christianity itself. Indeed, St. Paul sounds as if he felt he had been doing something unusual that took a bit of "nerve." In general, the evidence of the New Testament goes to show how loyal St. Paul was to his chief, and how splendidly St. Peter backed him up in times of difficulty. Their twin martyrdom sealed a life of co-operation all the more remarkable from the great difference in character between them.

It is interesting to find St. Paul still calling the Prince of the Apostles "Cephas," instead of "Peter." This suggests something of the care and thought expended on finding good Greek equivalents for Our Lord's words when there was any real difficulty in translating them. Our Lord, speaking in Aramaic, said "Thou art *kepha*," a rock, and since *kepha* is a masculine word it is easily used as the title of a man. But the Greek word for "rock" is feminine, *petra*, so that translation into Greek presented a problem. Yet as Christianity moved out of

Palestine, the translation had to be made, if the Church's constitution was to be understood by new converts. The first attempt was to put *kepha* into Greek letters, when it comes out as *Cephas*. That presented little difficulty to Greek-speaking Jews, many of whom surely had a smattering of Aramaic. But when the Gospel began to be preached to pagans, *Cephas* was completely mystifying, and mystifying about an important practical point. So the next step was to take *petra* and give it a masculine ending, *Petros*. That still needed a little explaining, but nothing like so much as *Cephas*. And from *Petros* we get all the versions of the name in different languages, the Latin *Petrus*, French *Pierre*, Spanish *Pedro*, as well of course as English *Peter*. All these still have to be explained; but once the Church's constitution was a clearly established fact which anyone could see, a slight verbal difficulty mattered much less than in the first generation.

This little bit of language-history gives a glimpse into the way the first Christians gave serious and critical consideration to the problems that faced them. The same serious and critical mind had to be applied to the far more difficult problem of the relation of Jew and Gentile in the Kingdom of Christ. It brings home to us how puzzling that problem originally was that men like St. Peter and St. Barnabas should have wobbled over it, even for a moment. (Gal. ii. 11-13.)

*The Main Argument.* Having disposed of the personal attack, St. Paul argues the case for Christian freedom. He argues it like a Jewish rabbi, in a way rather puzzling for modern minds, especially if they are not very familiar with the Old Testament. The important allusion to Abraham, Sara and Agar grows a little clearer if we read Genesis xvi and xxi.

What helps most to catch St. Paul's drift (for we are

not attempting more in this first reading) is to grasp two pairs of contrasted ideas which constantly appear in his thinking: the contrast between the Law of Moses and the freedom of faith; and the contrast between the flesh and the spirit (or Spirit). These are not identical issues, but they overlap, and St. Paul jumps from the one to the other as if his readers were familiar with both ideas. Remember always that St. Paul was writing to people who had heard it all before, even if they had not fully taken it in.

No one has ever grasped more vividly than St. Paul that every human being exists in a state of inward disharmony, tension and conflict. There is in us a principle of good which is constantly tripped up and thwarted by our tangled desires, the clamorous demands of the body and emotions. All this clamorous demand St. Paul calls "the flesh." This does not mean what we now call "sex"; it includes impurity of course, but quite as much quarrelsomeness, love of money, bullying, spite, envy, taking unfair advantage, ill-temper, the desire to be first, and so forth, in fact, all the stormy or insidious emotions which make our path so difficult. St. Paul's list of "works of the flesh" (Gal. v. 19-21) tells us what he means by the word. It is well to get hold of this meaning from the start, as we shall meet the word again and again in his Epistles.

But St. Paul also grasped something else, that God has never simply left man to himself. He has planted in man a Law, that is, an instinct or intuition as to what he should be and do. The very jangle in which we live is evidence of this law; we cannot disregard our nature and be happy. This law written on the hearts of men, the law of nature, is found all over the world; in the Epistle to the Romans we shall find St. Paul developing this fact more fully.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

To one people, the Jews, God had given yet further help. He had through the great prophet Moses given them a written statement of this same law that He had printed on the heart of mankind everywhere. This law is summarized in the Ten Commandments. But that was not all. God had buttressed and safeguarded His Law written on stone with a mass of customs and observances, intended to bring to it every support of education, habit, tradition and endeavour. But 400 years before giving this written Law, God had made clear that He was going to do something even greater: He made a promise to Abraham (Gen. xii. 1-8) a promise to bless all mankind and not only the descendants of Abraham. This promise was to be brought into effect by Abraham's descendants; and being given before the Law it could not be set aside by the Law.

In Christ, God had fulfilled the promise to Abraham. He had sent man yet a further help, by giving him not a law but a *spirit*. By this spirit, man was enabled freely and gladly to carry out the law of God, whether written on his heart or on tables of stone. From the way St. Paul uses the word, it is not always easy to tell whether we should write *spirit* or *Spirit*; there are no capitals in Greek to help. Sometimes it is clearly the Holy Ghost in person who is meant. Sometimes it is rather the effect of His Presence in us. In either case, St. Paul insists that we have here a gift which achieves two things. (a) It enables us to keep God's law, and (b) by doing so it makes the Jewish law unnecessary. Hence this idea of the Spirit of freedom, or freedom in the Spirit, stands in contrast both to the Law and to "the flesh." When St. Paul recalls that his converts had been redeemed from the gross immoralities of the heathen he stresses most deliverance from "the flesh." When he is thinking of the Judaizers, he stresses most deliverance from the Law.

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This deliverance from the Law of course does not mean that we can now break the Ten Commandments (though as a matter of fact some people, especially in Corinth, seem to have misunderstood St. Paul in this sense). The Ten Commandments are a summary of human nature itself, when it behaves really naturally. What St. Paul means is that "in the Spirit" we become able to keep that Law, not by a slavish obedience to external precepts, but impulsively from within as loving children of God. For the Law—this is a favourite point with St. Paul—did not enable men to obey God, but to discover how much they disobeyed Him. It convicts us of guilt, for in practice we find we simply cannot keep it in all its entirety by our own efforts. By contrast, the new free life "in the Spirit," obtained for us by faith in Christ, genuinely makes us obedient, and so it justifies us; that is, it makes us just.

One great modern help to the thought of St. Paul is the Little Way of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. She was facing a situation not entirely unlike the one with which he was coping; for she blew away the last vestiges of Jansenism. Now Jansenism had been much more Pharisaic than Christian in its moral tone; it produced the same sort of character as the Judaizers' doctrines would have done in the first century. St. Thérèse's teaching is essentially St. Paul's, save that where she was concerned with the problem of the individual life, he was working out the relations of whole civilizations and dispensations. This is all the more remarkable as she does not appear to have been a close student of St. Paul. Rather, she did what he did—turned straight to the Risen Jesus and from Him received the same lesson of freedom.

*A Personal Touch.* "See what a letter I have written to you with my own hand" (Gal. vi. 11). This means "what

big letters," not "what a long letter." In ancient times letters were usually dictated (quite often we get the names of St. Paul's secretaries in the course of an Epistle). Then the writer took the pen and added a few words in his own handwriting to authenticate the letter and guard against forgery. With St. Paul, this was specially necessary, for as we have already seen his enemies were not above forging letters in his name. See 2 Thess. ii. 2 and iii. 17, where it definitely looks as if he was taking precautions against something that had already happened. After this, we several times find him calling attention to the fact that he had added some words in his own hand; look at 1 Cor. xvi. 21 and Col. iv. 18. In Philem. 19 he puts a promise to pay in his own handwriting, to make it legally binding.

These sentences in his own writing were probably written in big letters because his eyesight was bad. At least, that is one interpretation of a mysterious affliction from which he clearly suffered—"a sting of my flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me" (2 Cor. xii. 7). Just what this was is not known for certain, but Gal. iv. 15 does rather hint at eye trouble of some kind. The probable reason why St. Luke attached himself to St. Paul is that this mysterious affliction made the attendance of a doctor a fairly constant necessity. It brings St. Paul before us to realize that his lifework was done in the face of some heavy physical disability which not only took toll of his strength but gave him an unimpressive appearance.

**THIS WEEK'S READING.** The Epistle to the Galatians.

This is the stiffest hurdle on the course, so even if you feel you have failed at it, do not give up the rest. Besides, you will be surprised how reading further will light up this bit. If in a few weeks' time you were to re-read Galatians a great deal will have become plain—simply because your general New Testament knowledge will have advanced, and you will be



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more at home with St. Paul. So even an apparently unsuccessful attempt this week is almost certain to prove worth while if you hold on.

*TO THINK ABOUT.* What an odd method this is of getting the great enterprise of Christian theology under way! Would it not have been better if St. Paul had written formal treatises on his doctrines? Or has the Epistle form, connected as it is with particular emergencies, any special advantage to offer?

# I. GREECE AND ASIA MINOR

## *Sixth Week*

### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. PAUL

#### First and Second Corinthians

AND what was happening to the Gospel all this time? Epistles are all very well, but possibly we are feeling a little tired of them. Besides, we have just come to a couple of Epistles—those to the Corinthians—which most need a detailed commentary if we are to catch their drift. So we are not going to attempt the impossible. Instead of reading them right through we are going to read extracts, but extracts that shed light on the life of the early Church, particularly on the way the Gospel was taught before the Gospels came to be written.

*The Spoken Gospel.* We can never too strongly grasp that the Gospel is older than the Gospels. This Spoken Gospel was the basis of the preaching of all the Apostles, and not least of St. Paul himself. In Gal. ii. St. Paul tells us how, after his long retreat in the desert, where he penetrated the mystery of our new life in the Risen Lord, he went to Jerusalem to confer with the Apostles. There he met St. James, Bishop of Jerusalem; St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles; and St. John. In the early chapters of Acts we constantly find St. John in the company of St. Peter. Other reasons why he was present at this epoch-making conference were that he had been a witness of certain events, such as the Transfiguration, at which not all the Apostles were present; and also no doubt he was already showing signs of his greatness as a theologian, and so was a useful man to have handy when St. Paul's theology was under discussion. St. Paul's theology is identical with

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. PAUL

St. John's, though each expressed himself in a markedly individual vocabulary. But St. Paul's case was altogether exceptional. He had never met Christ in the flesh, and after that encounter with the Risen Lord on the Damascus road (as well as other visions and revelations vouchsafed him) he naturally approached the story of Jesus on earth through the Heavenly Lord who had met him in the way.

So the conference had big problems to engage it. It ended by St. Peter, St. James and St. John recognizing St. Paul as an Apostle on the same footing as themselves, a witness to the Resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 8-9) and one who had received his commission, like themselves, straight from Christ (Acts xxii. 21). But as regards Our Lord's deeds and words while on earth, St. Paul was dependent on what the other Apostles had to tell him. And naturally they on their side had to make sure that he really knew the story of Jesus and His teaching.

That story and teaching was the main element of St. Paul's preaching, which is why it holds a small place in his Epistles. Consider. When he wrote an Epistle, he wrote to correct something that had gone wrong, an error of either doctrine or morals. Writing materials were expensive, and there were no organized postal services, save for the imperial government; private letters often meant sending someone specially, which again was expensive. Naturally then St. Paul gives his space to things his converts had failed to grip, not to what he had successfully hammered into their heads. Several times in the course of his Epistles we find him saying in effect, "As for the rest, remember what I told you." It is quite tantalizing!

The last thing about which his converts were likely to make mistakes was the basic substance of his teaching, the Gospel story. But if they did, there was one thing St. Paul could not do: he could not tell them to look it up

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in a book. For the only book available when he wrote to the Corinthians (about A.D. 55) was in Aramaic, St. Matthew's Gospel, which was of no use to Greek-speaking Gentile Christians. When therefore the Corinthians blundered about two of the most important events in the Gospel story, St. Paul had no resource but to run over the facts for them again. We found him doing this for the Thessalonians, when he ran over what he had already told them of Our Lord's teaching on the Second Advent. For the Corinthians, he rehearsed the story of the Eucharist, and of the Resurrection. And he did so for purely practical reasons—his converts were going wrong in both doctrine and morals. To the bad behaviour of certain Corinthian Christians we owe these *written* records of both events, the earliest in the Greek New Testament as it has come down to us.

When we compare St. Paul's story with St. Matthew's, we realize another important fact: each Apostle told his story in his own way, selecting details either of more interest to himself, or of more importance to his hearers. Thus while there was a common agreement among the Apostles as to which events in Our Lord's life they would put forward, there was no hard-and-fast rule about how each one should handle his material. St. Paul of course was not an eyewitness; we do not know which of the Twelve he was following, or whether (which is as likely) he had put together details from several of them. He tells us some facts not mentioned by any of the Evangelists, but which were part of the Spoken Gospel which he and they were everywhere engaged in preaching. These passages, earlier than any of the Greek Gospels, are a singularly precious vein of ore in the writings of St. Paul.

*Circumstances.* The two Epistles to the Corinthians were written from Ephesus, within a few months of each other,

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probably in A.D. 55, and as usual to meet an emergency. This time the crisis was caused, not by visitors from outside stirring up trouble, but by dissensions among the Christians of Corinth themselves—though this might have been helped by the news that elsewhere St. Paul's Apostolic authority was being called in question. The church had fallen into factions according to who had been baptized by whom (1 Cor. i. 11-17). Through these quarrels discipline had been much relaxed, so that shocking scandals had occurred, incest for one, and drunkenness at the Holy Communion for another. And it is possible that St. Paul's teaching on Christian freedom had been used as an excuse for this conduct. The attempt of the faithful party to hold by his real teaching had led to a rejection of his right to teach, at least with the full authority of an Apostle. It is well to remember that these Corinthian Christians had a particularly difficult environment. Corinth was a wicked city even by pagan standards, notorious both for licentious morals and for the quarrelsome disposition of its inhabitants.

Finally, the good party sent a deputation to St. Paul, consisting of Stephanus, Fortunatus and Achaicus (1 Cor. xvi. 17) who seem to have belonged to the household of a lady named Chloe. (1 Cor. i. 11.) They took either a verbal or a written message from the faithful party, not only explaining the situation, but asking for guidance on various points that had arisen, such as virginity and marriage. It is impressive to realize that, less than a quarter of a century after the Ascension, girls were already dedicating themselves to lifelong virginity.

St. Paul sent a letter back by the same party, reinforced by Timothy (1 Cor. iv. 17 and xvi. 10). This is our First Epistle, and it seems to have had a measure of success. But Timothy returned to Ephesus with a report that the trouble was not entirely healed; particularly

## FIRST AND SECOND CORINTHIANS

those who denied St. Paul's apostolic authority were proving stubborn. St. Paul then wrote again (our Second Epistle), warmly commending those who had repented at the exhortations of himself and Timothy; threatening to come himself and deal with the obdurate; and going fully into the question of his authority. This Epistle shows St. Paul at both his tenderest and his most severe. He comes back and back, most touchingly, to his grief at having to use such stern language, and in cases, stern measures. "If I make you sorrowful, who is he then that can make me glad?" (2 Cor. ii. 2). This time things seem to have quieted down. But the Corinthians remained factious and quarrelsome, and before the century was out we find Pope St. Clement I having to write to them again—but that is outside the scope of the New Testament.

All this makes a sad tangle and a muddy mess. Yet there shines through it a ray of bright light. The Corinthian Christians, in many ways so frail and faulty, yet excelled in charity and were very generous with their alms. With all their faults they were lovable—or lovable by St. Paul. Perhaps it was his most troublesome children who were dearest to him!

And these Epistles, so concerned with human weakness and folly, are studded with some of the most precious gems in all St. Paul's writings, notably the great Hymn of Charity which is more like a poem than a passage of prose. . . . This short account, though it will not clear up all the difficulties (even the full commentaries hardly do that!) may enable us to catch the drift and sample the treasure-house of St. Paul's mind and heart.

### **THIS WEEK'S READING.**

*The Spoken Gospel.* The Eucharist: 1 Cor. x. 14 to end of chap. xi.

The Resurrection: 1 Cor. xv, whole chapter.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. PAUL

*Autobiography.* Mainly in defence of his Apostolic Authority:

1 Cor. i-iv and ix.

2 Cor. xi and xii.

*Virginity and Marriage.* 1 Cor. vii.

*Golden Passages.* Tenderness for his converts: 2 Cor. ii and v.

His idea of his mission: 2 Cor. x.

The Body of Christ: 1 Cor. xii. 4-end.

Charity: 1 Cor. xiii.

**TO THINK ABOUT.** Try to set in order your impressions of St. Paul's character. Does it surprise you that he was a man greatly beloved? (N.B. No attempt will be made to give you an answer to this question—because no answer will be of service to you but your own.)

**Note:** This power of gaining love has gone with St. Paul down the centuries—the "Paul fans" have the most delightful intimacy with him age after age. A good example is St. Catherine of Siena in the fourteenth century. Miss Alice Curtayne, in her life of this Saint, tells us (p. 28) that: "In St. Paul's Epistles she found a garden of delight. She penetrated the great Apostle's mind, understanding perfectly his burning phrases, his tremendous ellipses, his cries to his friends to bear with his folly. To her he became 'that lover, Paul,' 'that glorious trumpeter,' or even—supreme expression of kinship—'quel Paoluccio' (that little Paul)."

## PART TWO

### ROME

#### II. ROME

##### *Seventh Week*

#### THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. PETER

##### St. Mark's Gospel

PARTLY for the sake of a change, this week we are going to break off our readings in St. Paul in order to bring home to our imagination this point about the Spoken Gospel. We are going to read St. Mark's Gospel (it takes a little over an hour), not thinking of it as a book, but as a sample of what *all* the Apostles were teaching by word of mouth, before our Gospels took shape and while they were being written and put into circulation. What St. Mark gives us is the habitual preaching of St. Peter. It bears traces of St. Peter's own personal interests, and the interests of his hearers—for as we said last week, each Apostle told his story in his own way, with an eye to the special needs of those he was teaching. At the same time it is a sample of that "Apostolic Word" by which the Church lived in the years before the Gospels were written.

What we are going to do, then, is to picture to ourselves St. Peter, not writing, but standing up day after day, especially Sunday by Sunday, telling his flock the story of Jesus. St. Mark wrote down that story as St. Peter had been in the habit of telling it to the Christians in Rome. Its particular vividness is due in part to this close co-operation of eyewitness and hearers—there are moments when we can almost catch the very gestures of the story-teller and the hard breathing of his audience.



## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. PETER

The living figure of St. Peter, standing up to tell the greatest of all stories—that is what we now wish to print on our minds.

**ST. PETER.** After being the leading figure for nearly half the Book of Acts St. Peter suddenly vanishes from the narrative. The exit is dramatic indeed, but it is followed by blank silence. True, he makes a brief reappearance at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts xv), appearing from nowhere and disappearing into it again, after setting the seal to all his own earlier work in admitting Gentiles to the Church. But his real disappearance comes some time earlier, after his deliverance from prison by an angel. St. Luke tells us (Acts xii. 17) that "he went into another place." This vagueness is so unlike St. Luke, who hardly ever spares us a place-name, that there must have been a reason for it.

And indeed there was. It is nowhere mentioned in the New Testament, but the earliest Church historians unanimously tell us that the "other place" was Rome. St. Peter had scrupulously fulfilled Christ's command to begin at Jerusalem, then go on to Judaea, Samaria and the rest of the world. He had already been to Antioch, to confirm the flourishing Church there. And as he must have seen that Jewish resistance to the claims of Our Lord was stiffening, rather than weakening, it is in the highest degree likely that he should have given some thought to what he should do if he were ever forced to leave the country.

The situation had changed in the years since the death of Christ. Territories that had been divided among several rulers in Our Lord's lifetime had been reunited under a single king, Herod Agrippa the First.<sup>1</sup> Escaping from his dominions was thus a much more difficult business than

<sup>1</sup> See note at end of chapter for details of the Herod Dynasty.

slipping out of the small territories of earlier rulers; St. Peter had to go much further afield to find safety. When he eluded the guards of Herod Agrippa he had to get right out of what we now call Palestine and Syria in order to find, not so much safety for himself as a centre for his work. Wherever he settled, there would be the Church's centre. He could either follow the line of least resistance and seek out a comparatively sheltered corner, or he could "launch out into the deep." Like a true fisher of men, he elected for the best and richest fishing grounds, Rome. There are indications that he may have considered other possible centres, Antioch for instance, which he already knew. He also seems to have realized that Alexandria had claims, as an intellectual capital in some ways more influential than Athens itself. Tradition has it that he sent his chief lieutenant St. Mark to found the church in Alexandria, which shows that he recognized its importance. But when all factors had been taken into account, Rome had no real rival—not, that is, if he wanted a permanent *centre*. Whatever happened in Rome would affect the rest of the Empire, for it would be carried to the ends of the earth by the great system of communications which radiated from the imperial capital. But just because it was the government centre, it was also the most dangerous place he could have chosen.

This danger was so well realized that all the Christian writers of the first century seem to be in an understanding to keep St. Peter's name out of any document that might have got him into trouble with the government. This was especially necessary after the Emperor Claudius banished the Jews from Rome, on account of tumults (Acts xviii, 2). Historians are inclined to connect these tumults with the preaching of St. Peter among the Jews of Rome. It was probably this edict which, by turning St. Peter out of Rome for a time, made it easy for him to attend

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. PETER

the Council of Jerusalem. (Acts xv.) There are other indications that he did not reside continuously in Rome, but made it his centre from which he travelled widely in that task of "confirming his brethren" which Our Lord had specially committed to him. From the way St. Luke introduces St. Peter's name at the Council one would never guess that he had been doing anything important in the interval—but then, that is just what St. Luke wanted to prevent anyone guessing. Nor is he the only one. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, makes no mention of St. Peter unless perhaps a joking allusion which those in the secret could easily guess, but not outsiders (Rom. xv. 20). And St. Peter himself, when he writes from Rome, calls it "Babylon" (1 Pet. v. 13). Indeed, it looks as if "Babylon" became a sort of code-word for Rome among the first Christians; St. John uses it again in the Apocalypse.

The story of St. Peter thus has to be pieced together from scraps of evidence—inscriptions, catacomb paintings, traditions written down a generation later from the lips of old men who had known him in their youth, and so forth. The one thing that is blazingly clear is the success of his mission, judging by the number of his converts and their quality; the pagan historian Tacitus describes the Roman martyrs under Nero as an "immense multitude"; while the slave-philosopher Epictetus, who probably saw the martyrdoms, gently upbraids his followers, lest they fail to attain "the courage of the Galileans." Of St. Peter's work in Rome we have these two mighty monuments; the great and faithful martyr-church which he founded, and the stories of Jesus on which he nourished their faith.

**ST. MARK.** The house of "Mary, the mother of John, who was surnamed Mark" (Acts xii. 12) was almost cer-

## ST. MARK'S GOSPEL

tainly the house where Our Lord instituted the Eucharist, and quite certainly something like the mother-house of early Christianity in Jerusalem. This lady, the aunt of Barnabas, appears to have been well-off, one of that company of wealthy women who play a helpful part in the early spread of the Faith. Mark must have been little more than a boy during Our Lord's ministry; the earliest tradition says definitely that he "had never heard nor had he accompanied the Lord."<sup>1</sup> Mark, however, may have been the young man wrapped in a linen cloth who turns up for a moment in Gethsemani (Mark xiv. 51-2); if the Eucharist had just been instituted in his own home he might easily have crept out in the dark and trailed the Apostles as they followed Our Lord to the olive garden. The story is perfectly pointless, except as St. Mark's "signature," so to speak. He simply *had* to put down the one time he himself came in contact with Our Lord, even though he cut no heroic figure.

Indeed, the impression we get of the young Mark is rather unheroic. Perhaps as the darling of a widowed mother he had been a little spoilt and softened. If so, he ranks among those encouraging people who later retrieve an unpromising start. We first hear of him definitely after the visit of St. Paul and St. Barnabas to Jerusalem to present the money collected by the Church in Antioch (Acts xi. 27-30). On their return they took John Mark,

<sup>1</sup> A number of these early traditions were recorded by Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor during the second century. He says he got his information from a certain "John the Priest" (some scholars refer to him as "John the Presbyter"; the same person is intended). The work of Papias has been lost; but it was used by the fourth-century historian Eusebius, who makes a number of quotations from it. A difficulty has been created because Eusebius himself was not perfectly certain as to who "John the Priest" was—whether St. John the Apostle or not. After much discussion, Catholic scholars now agree that St. John the Apostle is intended, therefore this information about St. Mark and others comes to us on the authority of the Beloved Disciple. See the quotation on pp. 179-80.

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. PETER

with them back to Antioch, and soon after he set out with them on their first missionary tour (xii. 25 and xiii. 5). He held out in Cyprus, where he probably had relations, since it was the native place of his cousin Barnabas. But the crossing to the mainland seems to have taken the heart out of him, and from the port of Perge he turned back (xiii. 18). Somewhat naturally, on the next trip St. Paul refused to have him in their party, though Barnabas wanted to give the boy a second chance. This led to the separation of St. Paul and St. Barnabas, and brought Silas on the scene as the travelling companion of St. Paul. (Acts xv. 36-41.)

It is pleasant to add that later St. Mark regained St. Paul's good opinion; perhaps such a severe judgment "shook him up" and opened his eyes. Besides, he must have got further training while helping St. Barnabas in Cyprus. St. Paul mentions him three times in his Epistles (Col. iv. 10; Philem. 24; and 2 Tim. iv. 11), and always as one he trusted.

St. Mark is, however, most closely associated with St. Peter, who calls him "my son Mark," (1 Pet. v. 13). All the early traditions bear this out. John the Priest (St. John the Apostle) calls him "the interpreter of Peter." What this means is not quite certain, but a likely meaning is that St. Peter did not know Greek very well, and that St. Mark helped him to put his preaching into Greek. At that time Greek was more useful than Latin for preaching in Rome, especially among the poor and the slaves; the story of Jesus had to be told in Greek to be understood by them. It is possible that St. Mark may have helped St. Peter to put his sermons into the simple, rather colloquial Greek which we find in his Gospel. For all the early traditions are unanimous about this: that St. Mark had no independent knowledge of Our Lord, but reproduced the teaching of St. Peter.

## ST. MARK'S GOSPEL

When it became known that St. Mark was noting St. Peter's teaching,<sup>1</sup> naturally people clamoured for copies. And St. Mark was very ready to oblige. His Gospel as we have it was probably in circulation before A.D. 60. But we are concerning ourselves with the time even before that, when St. Peter was still simply telling the greatest of all stories to the Christians of Rome.

**THIS WEEK'S READING.** St. Mark's Gospel, treating it, not as a book, but as a chance to "listen in" to an Apostle preaching.

Of course, St. Peter did not tell the whole story all at one go, at least not as a rule. Nevertheless, we can better appreciate the effect he produced if we try to get an impression of the Gospel *as a whole*. Hence if you possibly can, try to clear up time (rather more than an hour) to read St. Mark's Gospel at a single sitting. If you absolutely can't, observe the divisions given below.

Another good way would be for a family or a party of friends to stage the reading as a scene from the life of the early Church. No set-out is needed, for at first the Sacred Mysteries were celebrated in any convenient private house. Some of the churches in Rome are almost certainly built on the sites of such houses. Naturally they belonged to the wealthier members of the Christian community; the houses

<sup>1</sup> Clement of Alexandria, writing towards the end of the second century, records what he had heard from the old men who had known St. Peter. These "elders of the preceding generation" had said: "So this is the way that Mark went about the writing of his Gospel. Peter had preached the word of God publicly in Rome, and, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, he announced the Glad Tidings. Many of his hearers besought Mark, who had been in Peter's company now for a long time and had a lively remembrance of his words, to write down the discourses of the Apostle. Accordingly, Mark composed his Gospel and gave it to all who asked for it: and when Peter was apprised thereof, he neither forbade nor encouraged him."

(Quoted from *Saint Peter and the First Years of Christianity* by the Abbé Fouard, p. 369. It comes from that work of Eusebius already referred to on p. 67 when we spoke of Papias. The work by Clement himself from which Eusebius quotes is also extant. The learned references are: Eusebius, H.E. 6. 14, and Clem. Hypot. Rouet, 439.)

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. PETER

of the well-to-do in Rome lent themselves to such assemblies, for they were usually built round an open courtyard, with a fountain and some shrubs; the whole space was paved so that the congregation could sit or stand without getting covered with dust in summer or with mud in winter. At first a table would serve as an altar; and at the moment where we should now read the Gospel for the Day, St. Peter would stand up and tell some incident from the life of Our Lord. Indeed, he told them so often that he did what story-tellers are apt to do—got into a set way of telling each incident. One gets the feeling that if St. Mark had altered a word, the whole congregation would have shouted at him, "But that's not how Peter used to say it!"

The whole reading would be too much for one voice, so it would be best to take turns to represent St. Peter. The important thing is that the reader should render the story as if he were telling it, in a familiar, almost chatty way, to people he knew who had heard it often before. . . . If the group reading cannot be managed, at least try to make a picture of the scene in your own mind.

*Divisions of the Reading.* In the three first Gospels the climax of the first part of the narrative is St. Peter's Confession. Mark viii. 27-30 thus marks the natural halting-place if the reading is taken in two stages. The latter part of chap. viii is really the beginning of a new phase, in which Our Lord starts to prepare the minds of the Twelve for the difficult and unwelcome idea of His Death.

If still shorter divisions are wanted, take it like this:

The Mission in Capharnaum: chaps. i-iv.

In and out of Galilee: chaps. vi-viii.

Farewell to Galilee and the journey to Jerusalem via Jericho: chaps. ix.-xi.

The Last Week: Chaps xii-xvi.

**TO THINK ABOUT.** No question is proposed this week. Just let the narrative have its own way with you.

## ST. MARK'S GOSPEL

### Note: THE HEROD DYNASTY.

Herod is the name of a dynasty, not a man, like Tudor or Stuart rather than Henry or James. The founder of the dynasty, Herod the Great, was not even a Jew. He came from Idumea, a territory east of the Jordan, married a princess of the native Jewish dynasty (the Asmoneans or Hasmoneans), murdered most of her relations, and finally murdered herself. Barbarian as he was—the massacre of a few babies was a trifling event in his reign—he was an able ruler, who built up the Jewish State in subordination to Rome. For he was far too shrewd to imagine he could remain completely independent. The Jews hated him, both as a foreigner and on account of his pro-Roman policy. To pacify them, he built them the most beautiful Temple they had ever had, the Temple which Our Lord visited and whose ruin He foretold. It was so beautiful that, at the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the Roman general Titus tried to spare it. But it was set alight by a careless soldier and perished. On his triumphal arch in Rome, Titus had engraved pictures of some of its wonderful furnishings; and this arch is now one of our chief evidences about some features of the Temple worship.

Herod the Great was survived by three sons: Archelaus, Antipas and Philip. The Romans divided his territory among these three, giving each the title of tetrarch, ruler of a third. Archelaus was still ruling Judaea when the Holy Family came back from Egypt. But he soon fell into disfavour and was deposed, the Romans making Judaea a province of the Empire governed by a Roman official called a procurator. The fifth of these procurators was Pontius Pilate.

While these five procurators came and went, the other two brothers continued to rule their tetrarchies. Herod Antipas ruled Galilee, and his record is a bad one. He took his brother Philip's wife, which led to his murder of John the Baptist, as related in the Gospels; and he is the Herod before whom Our Lord was tried. Our Lord summed him up accurately when He called him "that fox." The third brother, Philip, was a much better man, and at one time we find Our Lord withdrawing into his tetrarchy, which was called Decapolis. Some of the parables about kings and lords are thought to contain topical allusions to the doings of these three Herod brothers.

These brothers had a nephew, Herod Agrippa the First, who was brought up under the eye of the Emperor in Rome, where he became thoroughly Romanized and also a really devout Jew.



## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. PETER

After the recall of Pilate, who had antagonized the Jews by his scornful treatment of their religion, Herod Agrippa was made king over practically the whole territory of his grandfather Herod the Great, with a broad hint that if he wanted to please the Imperial power, the way to do it was to please the Jews. Hence when he found that the execution of St. James pleased his difficult subjects (Acts xii. 8) he was incited to go further; he is the Herod of St. Peter's escape from prison. His son was the King Agrippa (Herod Agrippa the Second in the history books), before whom St. Paul was brought on the famous occasion when he appealed to Caesar.

## II. ROME

### *Eighth Week*

#### "CONFIRM THY BRETHREN"

The First Epistle of St. Peter; St. Mark again

WE are going to spend a second week on St. Peter, in order to stamp on our imaginations the pivotal part he played in the early spread of Christianity. There is a danger lest we measure him by his literary contribution. The mark he made on the world was made in other ways; by preaching; by his strategic move to Rome; by the fidelity and number of his converts; by his work of oversight, "confirming his brethren," as Our Lord bade him. Because of all this, the earliest Christian artists often represent him as Moses striking the rock. This idea, of St. Peter as the Second Moses, seems to have been common among the first Christians, for we find St. Irenaeus (died in A.D. 202) using the same figure in writing.

We are, however, for the moment concerned with his literary memorials, which are St. Mark's Gospel and his two Epistles. The second Epistle was written shortly before his martyrdom and does not therefore belong just at this point. So at present we shall keep to his Gospel (recorded by St. Mark), and to his first Epistle.

### ST. MARK'S GOSPEL

STYLE. One of the things almost impossible to bring out in any translation is the difference of style among the New Testament writers. This is because Greek had a much wider vocabulary than most languages; the English word "know" has to do duty for quite a handful of Greek words. And the supple Greek tenses and parti-

ciples make it possible to mark the passage of time more exactly than in other languages.

St. Mark's Gospel has for style the simplest possible Greek, verging on the colloquial. What makes this stand out is the very different style of St. Luke, who often tells the same stories in a more polished way. To get the idea—there are three English words for the same animal: moke, donkey, ass; and we realize at once that the flavour of a passage would alter according to which we used. When St. Peter related the story of the Triumphal Entry he used a word almost as common as "moke"; when St. Luke tells the same story, he prefers a more dignified word, with something of the literary flavour of "ass."

This kind of thing vanishes in translation. What remains is the build of the sentences. Did you notice how short they are, and how often strung together with an "and"? It is extraordinarily effective sometimes: one can almost hear the narrator gasp at each "and" as he describes what the disciples felt like as Our Lord set out for Jerusalem. (Mark x. 32.) It leaves an impression of the lonely figure of Jesus walking ahead, the Twelve huddling along behind Him, too terrified to come up with Him, or ask a question, so that He has to turn round and open the conversation Himself. . . . All through there is something artless and unexpected in the story, the sort of *naïveté* which sophisticated people sometimes dislike as irreverence. It is really simplicity of mind. Our Lord is too great to need the help of elegant phrases; He gains by bluntness. The other Evangelists choose their words with more care. We can hardly be too grateful for this unvarnished, uncircumspect narrative, blurt-ing out things that a later day liked to put more delicately—such as that at Nazareth Our Lord "could not" do any miracles, because of unbelief (Mark vi. 5). Compare

## THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PETER

this with Matt. xiii. 58 and Luke iv. 23. John vi. 42 also touches on it. Notice that though the other Evangelists make it clear that Our Lord was taunted for not working miracles at Nazareth, none of them save St. Mark uses that blunt "could not." Of course, if Our Lord "could not" do anything, it was because He observed the law God always observes in dealing with men, never to override His own gift of freewill.

Along with this bluntness, there is an unusual vividness in the story. We can feel the eyewitness in a multitude of tiny touches, unconsciously reproduced, which bespeak the personal character of the record. The other Evangelists have other merits which we shall appreciate in their due place. St. Mark deserves our gratitude for the way he has caught the individual quality of St. Peter's own story, its quick eye for detail, and the utter artlessness with which the story is told.

**OTHER CHARACTERISTICS.** This Gospel gives us very little of Our Lord's teaching; the exception is the very full account of the Second Advent and the end of the world. If you recall what was said in connection with 2 Thessalonians, you will understand why it was necessary to go into this with some fullness. In the main, St. Peter concentrates on Our Lord's deeds. This suited the temper of his audience, for both Jews and Romans had a marked practical spirit, more interested in action than in ideas. This also seems to be characteristic of St. Peter himself, as we can see from the sober, practical tone of his Epistles. One-third of the narrative in this Gospel is given to the Great Action, the Passion of Our Lord.

As St. Peter's audience was a mixed one, part Gentile, part Jewish, he translates Aramaic words and explain Jewish customs in a way St. Matthew, for instance, does not trouble to do. There are, however, three places where

## **"CONFIRM THY BRETHREN"**

St. Peter seems to have felt that he simply had to give Our Lord's actual words, as he had heard them in Aramaic. They are the unspeakable tenderness of "Talitha cumi" (v. 41); the "Abba, Father" of Gethsemani (xiv. 36); and the great cry on the Cross (xv. 34). Was it from St. Peter that St. Paul picked up "Abba, Father"? He uses it twice (Gal. iv. 6; Rom. viii. 15).

And St. Mark's Gospel is consistently hard on St. Peter. If we had only the other Gospels we should of course know that he was an impetuous person apt to bite off more than he could chew; but the full tale of his weakness is more unsparingly told here than anywhere else. The reason is clear; he was telling on himself. Indeed, he goes so far as to relate Our Lord's great rebuke, "Go behind Me, Satan" (viii. 33), without relating his own commission as the Rock. Turn to Matt. xvi. 18-23, and you will see the size of his omission! He could of course afford to pass it over in silence, for his authority was never questioned; there were plenty of witnesses as to its nature and origin. St. Peter did not have to justify his office before the Church; it was recognized by all the other Apostles, by the churches they founded and the converts they trained. Hence with modesty and courtesy he could leave it out of his personal story.

**ST. PETER'S FIRST EPISTLE.** When we turn to St. Peter's first Epistle the difference in style strikes us even in English—until we look at the end and discover (v. 12) that his secretary was our old friend Sylvanus (Silas) who had often written for St. Paul. Quite possibly St. Peter chose him for the sake of his experience in writing to dictation, and that too may account for some turns of phrase with a distinctly "Pauline" flavour. It looks as though St. Peter did not mind speaking in colloquial Greek, but drew the line at writing it. When he wanted to send out

## THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PETER

a formal letter he preferred a more dignified style. Certainly dignity is one of the outstanding characteristics of this short letter.

There is, however, nothing characteristically "Pauline" in the subject-matter, which reveals a mind of very different cast. The exact reason for writing it is not known, neither is the date. It is addressed to Christians in Asia Minor (i. 1) to encourage them during persecution. There is nothing to tell us whether these were converts made by St. Peter at some period of his life, or were converts of St. Paul. Neither do we know whether they were originally Jews or pagans.

The mention of Sylvanus, however, suggests an interesting possibility: was this St. Peter's way of coming to the help of a colleague who was being attacked? Indeed, one wonders whether St. Paul had not actually sent Sylvanus to Rome to report to St. Peter what was happening in Galatia, and the difficulties put in his way by baptized Jews who wanted to circumcise his pagan converts. Then too there was the question of St. Paul's authority. If this letter is addressed, as it may well be, to the same people as the Epistle to the Galatians, it may be a Roman acknowledgment of the converts made by St. Paul; St. Peter is indicating, delicately but firmly, that he recognizes St. Paul's mission. The Galatians are mentioned in the first greeting, so this may be St. Peter's way of quietly putting St. Paul's opponents in their place.

The bearing of Christians under persecution is the main theme of the Epistle, which contains some of the most precious New Testament teaching on suffering. It has the same practical outlook—deeds rather than words—which we noticed in St. Mark's Gospel. Indeed, if we want a short compendium of Christian behaviour, with the dogmas in which it is rooted, we shall hardly find anything more to the point than this short Epistle.

**"CONFIRM THY BRETHREN"**

**THIS WEEK'S READING.** The first ten chapters of St. Mark's Gospel (more if you have time).  
The First Epistle of St. Peter.

**TO THINK ABOUT.** Try to set in order your impressions of St. Peter's character. It is a study of the opposite kind from St. Paul's. As we saw, St. Paul was fitted by his natural gifts for the mission assigned to him. St. Peter's natural character could hardly have been less rocklike: he had delightful human qualities of the kind we call "endearing" because we have a fellow-feeling for his mixture of enthusiasm with sudden failures of nerve. But he was hardly cut out for the pivotal figure of a great revolution! The encouraging lesson is of course that God can make anything of human nature, provided it is fully surrendered to Him. And along with this is the point so dear to G. K. Chesterton—that in Peter Christ built His Church, not on genius, but on the average man. The Commission of St. Peter is the ordinary man's charter, the guarantee that God will always see him through and always has a use for him. . . . No worked-out answer will be given to this question, as your own reflections are what matter. Besides what you have read, look up the following passages: Matt. xvi. 13-28; xvii. 23-6; Luke v. 1-11; xii. 35-53; xxii. 31-62; John i. 35-42; xviii. 10-27; xx. 1-10; xxi (whole chapter).

**Note: JEWISH PARTIES IN THE TIME OF CHRIST.**

Like other peoples, the Jews had their parties. There was a conservative and aristocratic party, the Sadducees; an extreme revolutionary party, the Zealots; and a centre party, the Pharisees. As the dominant interest of the Jews was religion, these parties were grouped by their religious outlook, especially in regard to the burning question of the Messiah. These three parties were united in only one thing (apart from national feeling): they all hated the one secularist party, the Herodians, who as their name indicates, supported the Herod Dynasty. The Herods stood for national life in subordination to Rome, a policy obnoxious to all the others, though least to the Sadducees, who as we shall see had in actual fact come to terms with Rome. The Pharisees, the most uncompromisingly religious of the three parties, particularly hated

## THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PETER

the Herodians. It is highly ironical that the Pharisees and the Herodians once made common cause to entrap Our Lord.

1. *The Sadducees* were the aristocratic party. As the Jewish aristocracy consisted of priestly families (for among the Jews the priesthood was hereditary, not vocational), it was the party whose main interest was the Temple. Little as they liked the Herods, they felt immense pride in the beautiful Temple which Herod the Great had built, about forty years before the ministry of Our Lord. Some of the priestly families were poor, some were well-to-do, and the High Priestly family was enormously rich.

The Roman policy was to act, as far as possible, at least in newly conquered territory, through the local aristocracy, while taking steps to see that that aristocracy was not in a position to head a revolt. Hence the Romans set aside the Jewish rule by which a High Priest held office for life; they deposed Annas, and appointed his son-in-law, Caiaphas, in his place. However, Annas and Caiaphas continued to work together politically, for what they understood as the good of their country. It was an assertion of national independence to take Our Lord to Annas before bringing Him before Caiaphas.

The Sadducees had political ability and political experience. They saw clearly that it was humanly impossible to overthrow Rome, and they regarded Divine intervention as a chimera of the multitude. They concentrated therefore on getting from Rome the best terms possible for the country—and for themselves. They were quite genuinely patriotic, but in a worldly way which made them fall easy victims to the temptation of their position. That temptation was to be too much swayed by the fact that getting good terms for the nation made it very easy to secure a position of privilege for themselves. For them therefore patriotism and the defence of their own privileges came to be very closely connected. While they did not dare to repudiate openly any interest in the coming of the Messias, their real interest was to make sure that no one calling himself Messias should upset their very comfortable arrangements with Rome.

These comfortable arrangements included not only a measure of real power but at least one opportunity for almost unlimited graft. A rule was made that anyone offering sacrifices in the Temple must buy the beast or bird in a special market, on the excuse of ensuring its ceremonial cleanness according to the Law of Moses. And these sacrificial animals and birds must be paid for in a special coinage which circulated nowhere save in the



Temple: the first thing then that a pious Jew had to do in Jerusalem was to change his money before buying his sacrifices. There was thus a double opportunity for a rake-off, and it was on this that the High Priestly family grew so enormously rich. Decent Jews all over the world were indignant at the scandal; but no one did anything about it until Our Lord drove out the cattle and threw over the tables of the money-changers. By doing so, He made implacable enemies of the High Priestly family and, humanly speaking, ensured His own death.

Since the Romans generally worked through local leaders, they left the Jewish Great Council—the Sanhedrin—in operation, cutting its claws only in one way; the Romans did not allow the Sanhedrin to pass sentence of death on anyone. That is why Our Lord had to be brought before the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate. The name “Sanhedrin” is not used in the New Testament, but we have frequent references to the Council, both in the Gospels and in Acts. Indeed, in Acts xxiii. 1-10 we find St. Paul taking advantage of the parties on the Council to throw its deliberations into confusion. There were Pharisees in the Sanhedrin as well as Sadducees; but on the whole it represented the conservative, priestly, aristocratic element among the Jews. They were concerned to maintain the power and privileges of the Sanhedrin, partly as a symbol of Jewish national independence, partly because of the very real power and influence which they themselves enjoyed, even under Roman control.

Since this was the outlook of the Sadducees, it is not surprising that they should have been inclined to materialism in religion. They denied the existence of angels, and disbelieved in the life after death. Our Lord treated them with more contempt than He showed to any other party among the Jews; even the professedly worldly Herodians got a less icy reception. Few of His disciples came from the Sadducees. In the Gospels we hear only of Nicodemus, who sought Him by night, and Joseph of Arimathea, who buried Him. After Pentecost, however, a number of priests were converted by the preaching of the Apostles (Acts vi. 7). Zachary, the father of the Baptist, was a priest, which may serve to remind us that no human group is all bad; indeed, the less wealthy Sadducees had many good qualities, though they seem to have shared a sort of timidity in admitting unusual Divine action, which perhaps characterizes those who have much to lose if God acts outside recognized official channels.

2. *The Pharisees.* We are so used to the way Our Lord argued

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with the Pharisees, the centre party, that we are apt to think of them as His chief opponents. Actually they were the section of the nation which He had the best chance to win to His side; His arguing with them was an enormous compliment (which He deliberately did not pay to the Sadducees: see Mark xi. 27-33), since it meant a hope that their better mind might prevail. For the Pharisaic party did in fact contain the cream of Israelite piety, and it was from among the Pharisees that Our Lord's followers were nearly all drawn.

Before considering the defects of the Pharisees it is important to realize their good points. They did not believe in violence as the means to the reign of the Messiah, but they did most emphatically believe in and hope for the coming of the Messiah. Their view was a spiritual one—that if all Israel would keep the Law perfectly for one day, Messiah would come. They were the real teachers of the people; the lawyers, doctors and scribes we read of were all Pharisees, men who devoted their lives to the study of God's Law and its dissemination among the people. Practically all the genuine, heartfelt piety of Israel was to be found in their ranks. Hence, to speak very humanly, Our Lord was more disappointed in them than in any others, for He rightly expected more. The chances He gave them show that there was always a real hope that they might see the truth and obey it.

The faults which the word "Pharisee" brings to our minds sprang up very simply and naturally, where there was no sufficient genuine piety to counteract the temptations of a revered public position. Even zeal for the Law could turn to evil in several ways. For in order to safeguard the Law, they fenced it round with minute regulations, and in time these regulations came to mean more to them than the great requirements of morality. Thus they thought themselves virtuous because they were always fussing about tiny points, and so became blind to their failures in things of real moment. As Our Lord said, they strained at gnats and swallowed camels. Further, this entanglement in minute rules had the effect of marking them off as a special class of the professionally devout, recognizable by all kinds of outward signs, dress, demeanour, prayer in public, an elaborate ritual of cleanliness, and so on. For such a programme the man with a family to support simply could not find time. Hence the ordinary practice of virtue came to seem a lesser thing than ostentatious piety. Many even of the genuinely devout were taken in by it, and this gave the Pharisees an opportunity for what amounted to blackmail:

## "CONFIRM THY BRETHREN"

widows in particular could be eaten out of house and home while supporting some professionally pious Pharisee. Surrounded thus with adulation, they came to think themselves the only really good people, and so added pride to their other sins.

By the time of Christ, the Pharisees were largely living in a world of shams, acting a part all the time. Hence Our Lord called them "play-actors," for that is what *hypocrites* originally means. They had got into a state where it was almost impossible for them to be sincere about anything; their judgment was bribed beforehand. And since their comforts depended upon popular esteem, they were very sensitive to any rivalry for popular favour. A Teacher who supplanted them with the multitude—worse, who turned the crowd's laughter against them—aroused all the envy and meanness of which they were capable. Their influence with the people was more precious to them than the Divine offer of truth. Hence when the Law over which they pored reached its fulfilment, they tried by every means in their power to crush that fulfilment. Truth came to them in unexpected guise, a guise that sifted out sincerity from insincerity. And because they had long lived with shams, which bribed their judgment in a thousand subtle ways, they made common cause with their enemies, the Sadducees, the Herodians and the Romans, to destroy Him of whom all the prophets had spoken.

3. *The Zealots.* The revolutionary party, called the Zealots, make much less showing in the New Testament than the others, though one of the Twelve Apostles was drawn from among them. Their desire was to overthrow Rome by force, and they expected the Messiah to be a military leader to bring them victory. This was largely the party of the poor, the people without political "realism" of any kind. During the time of Our Lord, neither the Pharisees nor the Sadducees approved of them, though for rather different reasons. But they became the instrument by which His doom on the nation was fulfilled. After the rejection of the true Messiah by the sober and responsible elements in the nation, influence passed more and more to the extravagant and irresponsible. It was the Zealots' point of view which gained ground—gained it over the political astuteness of the Sadducees and the spirituality of the Pharisees. The penalty of blindness was more blindness, until the Jews lost all sense of reality and rushed like madmen upon their fate. They launched out on a course which could only bring them destruction. They revolted against Rome, and in A.D. 70 they suffered the terrible fate which Our Lord had foretold.

## II. ROME

### *Ninth Week*

#### THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

##### The Epistle to the Romans

WE are now in a much better position to appreciate St. Paul's action in sending a carefully considered statement of his doctrine to Rome. For this Epistle is unlike all the rest of his writings, in being addressed to people for whom he had no special responsibility. Half-jokingly, he makes the point himself: he had always been careful not to "build upon another man's foundation" (Rom. xv. 20). The "other man" in his mind was of course St. Peter.

This indirect allusion is the nearest St. Paul comes to mentioning St. Peter in this Epistle. As we saw before, there seems to have been an understanding among the Christian leaders not to make St. Peter's position more dangerous than it actually was, by talking about him where the talk could be overheard, so to speak, in the wrong quarters. All the same, it is quite possible that St. Peter had something to do with the writing of this Epistle, even if he merely gave direction to an idea already present in St. Paul's mind. It has even been suggested that St. Peter and St. Paul had met for a consultation—St. Peter did not spend all his time in his headquarters at Rome—and that this Epistle is an outcome of that meeting.

That Romans has some connection with Galatians is clear to anyone who has read both. But the nature of the connection is less obvious. If Galatians had been written seven years earlier, then the trouble it had stirred

up would have already developed, and Romans would be an attempt to correct it by a fuller statement of the same doctrines. If, as others think, the two Epistles were composed at about the same date (A.D. 56), then St. Paul realized at the time of writing to the Galatians that a more careful, and perhaps less breathless account of his position should be sent out to forestall any possible misunderstanding. And such an account, intended for the whole Church, would be best "planted" at Rome, whence it would be carried to the ends of the earth by Christians moving along the great trade routes on their lawful occasions.

The two Epistles to the Corinthians (A.D. 55) rather suggest that misunderstanding did in fact take place, whether of the already written Epistle to the Galatians, or of St. Paul's teaching by word of mouth. Some did take him to mean that freedom in the Spirit meant freedom from the restraints of the moral law. Echoes of the conflict are heard in various parts of the New Testament. As we saw before, it is perfectly possible that St. Paul reported the matter to St. Peter, and that 1 Peter was St. Peter's response to an appeal for guidance and support.

Yet it would leave something more to be desired. It may have been St. Peter himself who advised St. Paul to put in writing a more measured statement of his doctrine than was possible when he was writing in the heat of some particular controversy. The need for such a move was becoming obvious; St. Paul would naturally feel a growing desire to set out his doctrine disentangled from any one emergency. And since his views were challenged in various quarters, it would help greatly if the Church at large could receive his statement from Rome. For its mere circulation from St. Peter's headquarters would be a guarantee that St. Peter accepted it and was behind St. Paul.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

Some such situation would account for the special character of Romans among the writings of St. Paul. It is the nearest thing to a formal treatise that he ever wrote. The personal greetings at the beginning and end do but emphasize this, for the greetings are sent to people he had met on his travels and theirs; there is no special emergency of the Roman Church with which he is concerned; nor has he, as far as we can gather, yet visited Rome itself. The situation with which he is dealing is one that affects the Universal Church, and that, and that alone, is why this Epistle is addressed to Rome.

*Background.* Various indications suggest that St. Paul had come to a point where his whole future course was under review in his mind. Greece and Asia Minor were dotted with churches of his founding; indeed, humanly speaking, he had made these territories too hot to hold him. Was this perhaps a sign that he should go further afield, say to Spain, taking Rome on the way? (Rom. xv. 24, 28.)

But before leaving his already founded churches, there was something he must do for them: he must make clear to Christian Jewry, in its home and citadel, Jerusalem, that Gentile Christians were really and truly their brethren. For this reason, he not only organized a large-scale collection among his Gentile converts for the Jerusalem church; he arranged for a deputation of Gentile Christians to carry the gift to Jerusalem in his company. If you noticed the changes to "we" in Acts, it looks as if one of them was St. Luke himself. Another was that Trophimus whose presence in Jerusalem (Acts xxi. 29) gave excuse for the riot against St. Paul. Read Acts xxi, with a glance back at xx, and Romans xv. 13-38.

The Epistle to the Romans was written from Cenchrae,

a port from which ships plied to Palestine, indeed, a sort of junction for travellers by sea and road, on the through route from Rome to the East. Look at the map. The Greek peninsula narrows to an isthmus where the Corinthian Games were held—in 1 Cor. ix. 24-7 we find St. Paul illustrating his doctrine with metaphors from the racing and boxing which his readers loved. Through this isthmus a canal had been dug; at the western end of the canal stood Corinth, at its eastern end was Cenchrae. St. Luke does not mention St. Paul's presence there at this time, though he mentions an earlier visit (Acts xviii. 18), when St. Paul had been on his way to Jerusalem via Ephesus, just as he was now.

St. Paul seems to have been waiting for his party to muster, and filled in the time writing this Epistle with such local help as he could get. He found a Christian lady, Phœbe, preparing to start for Rome (Rom. xvi. 1). She was one of the *ministrae*, women who organized the distribution of alms to needy women members of the church. This gave him an excellent chance to get a letter carried; there were no posts in those days for anyone but the Emperor. None of his usual secretaries was at hand; but he found someone called Tertius ready to step into the breach (Rom. xvi. 22). Indeed, Tertius seems to have been so proud of his function that he simply *had* to mention it.

As we know, St. Paul did get to Rome, but as a prisoner in chains and very much later than he hoped to do. And a good tradition has it that he also got to Spain. That this journey to Jerusalem, a hornets' nest of his enemies, was exceedingly dangerous, was patent to everyone, not least to himself. Before taking the risk (which he judged necessary for the sake of the Church, to bind together the two elements in the Church by the bond of charity) he gathered up threads. He sent to Rome this

careful statement of his doctrinal position. If anything happened to him, his teaching would still spread. And it would spread from Rome, with all that meant of St. Peter's approval and support.

*St. Paul's Friendships.* Romans xvi is worth glancing through as a picture of friendship, and not only St. Paul's. Verses 21-8 suggest people eagerly crowding round the letter-writer—"Oh, writing to Rome? Do send greetings from me!" And not till they were satisfied could St. Paul get hold of Tertius again to finish off what he was saying.

Notice how individual are St. Paul's greetings; he finds something special to say about almost each one. Prisca and Aquila we have met before, in Corinth and Ephesus (Acts xviii); Priscilla was a diminutive used among intimate friends; in a public letter St. Paul uses her formal name. Notice that twice she is named before her husband, as if she had been the leading spirit in that partnership. . . . Verse 13 is more than a delicious greeting to an old lady; many women, one feels, must have wanted to mother St. Paul; he does not strike us as particularly good at taking care of himself! But look at Mark xv. 21 and you will find the name Rufus again in an unexpected connection. Did it ever occur to you to wonder why on earth St. Peter broke off just there to mention Simon of Cyrene's relations? But if they were members of his flock in Rome we can see why: Indeed, it suggests a picture of St. Peter pausing an instant to point them out, as if to say, "There they are, ask them." And if St. Paul names only Rufus, that may mean he had only met one of the brothers, the one who travelled (perhaps) while the other carried on the family business in Rome, or something like that. . . . These lists of names are a happy hunting-ground of scholars, because they help in this



## THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

kind of piecing together. Also, sometimes the names turn up elsewhere. Tryphæna and Tryphosa, for instance (verse 12), were twin sisters whose names have been found in an inscription.

**THIS WEEK'S READING.** The Epistle to the Romans (or parts).

The Epistle has a personal introduction and close, chaps. i. 1-15 and xv. 13 to end of xvi. The main body falls into two sections: doctrinal (i. 16 to end of xi) and moral (xii. to xv. 12). The short moral section is straightforward, but the doctrinal section calls for some help in order to follow it. Further, at certain points St. Paul pauses to elaborate details, and these elaborations are confusing without really detailed explanation. *No one should hesitate* to omit these elaborations in a first reading; indeed, it is easier to get the thread of the argument without them. They are put *in brackets* in the following analysis of the argument:

*The argument.* (Omit sections in brackets.) St. Paul is working out his old problem of the relation of the new revelation in Christ to the old revelation through Moses.

Chap. i. The case against the Gentiles. God had written His law on their hearts (the natural law); yet they did not keep it.

Chap. ii. The case against the Jews. God had reinforced the Natural Law by giving them the Written Law of Moses. Not only did they not keep it; they scorned the Gentiles who, with less to help them, broke the Natural Law.

(Chaps. iii and iv. Elaboration of the case against the Jews.)

Chap. v. Thus both Jews and Gentiles have failed and lie under condemnation. Hence God in His mercy has taken action of an entirely new kind. He has sent His Son, Jesus Christ, as the New Adam to refound the human race at a new level, endowing it through Jesus with the power to please Him. This offer of grace is open without conditions (such as becoming a Jewish proselyte involved). It is an entirely free gift in Christ.

Chap. vi. This cannot mean, as some apparently supposed,

## THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

that we now have licence to break the old law, whether we think of it as the Law of Nature or the Law of Moses. Rather we are at last enabled to keep it. Indeed, the sign that we really possess the new freedom is that we become able to keep the law of our nature, but now with a new spontaneity and perfection.

Chap. vii. Yet this freedom may not come to us all in a day.

There may be an interval of conflict within us, the double conflict we referred to in Galatians. Old appetites may assert themselves against the new life in the Spirit; and so may a habit of rigid and slavish obedience. From this twin conflict we can only be delivered in one way—by a full surrender to the grace of God through Our Lord Jesus Christ. (Everyone feels that there is a large element of autobiography in this passage.)

Chap. viii. The great hymn of the New Life in Christ. It is remarkable how St. Paul, when he breaks loose from controversy to speak of the supernatural life in itself, soars up to the high levels of poetry.

(Chap. ix. Elaboration—St. Paul's grief over Israel, and a study of the mysteries of God's providence.)

Chap. x. Knits up the argument.

Chap. xi. A warning to Christians not triumph over the Jews.

If God has dealt thus severely with those to whom He made promises, those who enjoy His mercy without promise must be careful not to presume. In the *climax* (verses 82-6) St. Paul soars once more to the heights of poetry.

Chaps. xii-xv. 13. The moral application flows from the doctrine and is quite straightforward.

N.B. If you sometimes find St. Paul difficult, don't worry, for so did St. Peter. Look at 2 Pet. iii. 15-16. It is much better to be sometimes puzzled than to imagine we understand everything. If we lay to heart St. Peter's warning we shall earn his blessing. And St. Paul is not all difficulty; there is plenty to warm our hearts and renew our courage and hope.

**TO THINK ABOUT.** Try to get hold of a "life" of St. Paul and form an idea of it as a whole. Any Catholic library that

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has survived the blitz is sure to have something, if it is only the few pages in Butler's *Lives of the Saints*.

The reason for this advice is that we are now getting near the end of the period covered by the Book of Acts. It was written most probably in A.D. 61, Romans in A.D. 56. And once we come to the end of St. Luke's narrative, no one else takes up the story. The later history of St. Paul, like that of St. Peter, has to be pieced together from scattered fragments of evidence. There is no room to gather it together for you in a book like this; anyway, it is not necessary, as it has already been done by scholars and "written up" in varying degrees of fullness by several dependable authors. You will follow the latter part of the New Testament very much more easily if you will read a life of St. Paul at this stage. If you cannot get hold of a life of St. Paul, try a short history of the Church in the earliest period.

## PART THREE

# PALESTINE

### III. PALESTINE

#### *Tenth Week*

#### THE MOST DEAR PHYSICIAN

##### St. Luke's Gospel

FOR the next few weeks we are going to leave St. Paul making his slow way to Rome via the prison of the Roman Governor in Caesarea. Not until he reaches Rome will he take up his pen again, so we shall use the interval to fill in some developments in the New Testament more directly linked with Palestine.

The first link is provided by St. Paul himself. We left him in A.D. 56, waiting at Cenchræ for his boat and for the party that was to travel with him. Now, one member of that party was a very gifted writer, who apparently was already planning to use his gift in the service of Our Lord. A year earlier, when writing to the Corinthians in A.D. 55, St. Paul had casually alluded to "the brother whose praise is in the gospel through all the churches" (2 Cor. viii. 18). From very early times this has been taken to refer to St. Luke.

**ST. LUKE.** If you noted the "we" passages in Acts, you will have realized that St. Luke accompanied St. Paul to Jerusalem on this ill-fated visit, and then stayed at his side during his imprisonment in Palestine, through the long, dangerous journey, and for at least two years<sup>1</sup> of

<sup>1</sup> When a Roman citizen appealed to Caesar, his accusers were given two years to get their case together and follow him to the Roman courts. If they did not do so, the case went by default and the prisoner was released. St. Luke is giving a broad hint that St. Paul's enemies were moved by spite and could produce no charge that would stand scrutiny.

his imprisonment in Rome. According to most scholars, St. Luke occupied himself in those two years by writing, first, his Gospel (A.D. 59-60 as near as we can make out), and then Acts (A.D. 60-1). Indeed, he was in such a hurry<sup>1</sup> to get on to Acts that he finished his Gospel so that it looks as if Our Lord's Ascension took place the same day as the Resurrection! We have to go to Acts for the completed story.

This visit to Palestine in company with St. Paul is the only time we actually hear of St. Luke's being in the country. But there is one good reason for thinking he had been there before: his account of the Infancy of Our Lord is clearly derived from Our Lady. The date of her death is uncertain, but it was probably before St. Paul's visit in A.D. 56. Hence a personal meeting between St. Luke and the Mother of God would point to an earlier visit. And we strongly feel the influence of Mary, not only in this part of St. Luke's narrative, but in his very marked interest in women.

According to the earliest tradition, St. Luke was not a Jew but a Gentile, a Syrian from Antioch. Hence, he had not the detailed familiarity with the Palestine landscape which we find in the other Gospels. Though it is fairly obvious that he had visited some of the scenes of the Ministry, there are a number of passages in which he speaks vaguely of "a certain place," and this is quite unlike his habit in Acts, where he lingers lovingly over the names. We should think of St. Luke as one of the earliest pilgrims to the Holy Places, which he saw, not all built over as they now are, but as they had been during the Ministry of Our Lord. Naturally, he looked at the country with the eyes of a travelled man, accus-

<sup>1</sup> A possible reason for the hurried ending is that St. Luke's Gospel would just fill a papyrus sheet of the largest size, so he might have been feeling cramped for space as he reached the end. See note on papyri, p. 27.

## ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL

tomed to size up a new region. Where the other Evangelists speak of the Sea of Galilee, St. Luke firmly calls it the Lake.

*The Historian and His Material.* St. Luke then was not an eyewitness of the story he tells in his Gospel. In this he differs from the other Evangelists, who were either telling their own experiences (St. Matthew and St. John) or reproducing the account of an eyewitness (St. Mark). This does not mean that they recorded only what they had seen and heard; it was open to them to obtain the testimony of others, as St. Matthew must have done over the Infancy narrative, where he has evidently got hold of St. Joseph's story. And the story of the Temptation can only have been supplied by Our Lord.

Still, when all allowance has been made, the broad contrast remains: of the four Evangelists, St Luke alone had to collect and sift his material like a modern author. He was writing of someone he had never seen who had died thirty years or so earlier, about whom people still living could be questioned. Thus we find St. Luke, just landed at Caesarea, picking the brains of "Mnason an old disciple" on the ride to Jerusalem (Acts xxi. 16).

As a matter of fact, wherever St. Luke in Acts introduces an apparently pointless name, it is usually his way of telling us where he got his information: the maid-servant Rhode, for instance. And in some cases it is possible that the names in Acts refer back to the Gospel which he had just finished writing. Consider the intriguing reference to Herod's foster-brother in Acts xiii. 1. The immediate purpose is to let us know how he came to be so well up in Herod's thoughts and feelings in the preceding chapter. But there is another sign that St. Luke had "inside" information about the Herod family: he is the only Evangelist to tell us of Our Lord's trial before Herod

Antipas (the uncle of Herod Agrippa the First who imprisoned St. Peter<sup>1</sup>). There is plenty of evidence that St. Luke liked his information at first hand and knew how to get it. In Acts, it is always interesting to try to spot his informant. He nearly always gives us a clue. There was, for instance, only one person who could have told him that St. Stephen before the Council had "the face of an angel"—St. Paul. And the mention of Rhode (above) reminds us that St. Luke, when in Rome with St. Paul, would have had an opportunity to consult St. Peter. Even if he had collected the story from others while in Palestine, he had in addition this direct "line" on events related in the early chapters of Acts, before St. Paul comes on the scene.

*Documents.* St. Luke himself, however, does not dwell on this work of collecting evidence from eyewitnesses. What he mentions is written records. In the very first verse of his Gospel he tells us that "many have taken in hand to set forth in order a narration of the things that have been accomplished among us." Reading and writing were common in these days, so that naturally Christians early began to make notes of the Apostles' preaching, and such notes might in time swell to a considerable narrative. St. Luke, travelling with St. Paul, had every opportunity to make a collection of such material.

The first contributor to it of course would be St. Paul himself. For when the other Apostles gave him "the right hand of fellowship," neither he nor they were likely to trust entirely to their well-trained Jewish memories. This memory-training, given to ordinary Jewish boys, has an important place in the providential preparation for the Gospel, for it meant that the Twelve Apostles had far more reliable memories than we can count on nowa-

<sup>1</sup> See note on p. 71.

## ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL

days. Still, they would not trust to this indefinitely. Above all, when the Apostles separated and left Jerusalem, there are indications that they drew up some sort of document which they all carried away with them. As St. Paul's standing as an Apostle was exceptional, it is a reasonable supposition (borne out by his absolute confidence that he was teaching the same as his colleagues) that he was sent away with some sort of written record approved by the other Apostles. This written record would be the basis of St. Luke's collection—supplemented of course by any additions or comments added orally by St. Paul. There is an interesting check on this, for there are two cases in which we know St. Paul's form of the story—the Resurrection appearances, and the institution of the Eucharist. In the case of the Resurrection, St. Luke “telescopes” the narrative in a way he was rather given to doing, so that the similarity to St. Paul's story is somewhat obscured. But it is otherwise in the case of the Eucharist. While all the four accounts differ in details, they fall into two main groups: Matthew—Mark, and Luke—Paul.

*The Three Synoptists.*<sup>1</sup> The relation of St. Luke to St. Mark and St. Matthew has been warmly discussed, for the three contain much common material. Theoretically, St. Luke might have had a copy of St. Mark in his hands, at least while he was in Rome with St. Paul, for St. Mark's Gospel was in circulation some time before A.D. 60, and St. Paul's arrival in Rome probably took place in A.D. 59. There is, however, no particular reason to suppose that

<sup>1</sup> The first three Evangelists are called the “Synoptists,” and their works the “Synoptic Gospels,” from a Greek word meaning “bird's-eye view.” All three give a sort of panoramic picture, in which the main framework of events is given by all, while St. Matthew and St. Luke also fit in a good deal that illustrated their particular aim and purpose in writing. St. John, writing much later, is not concerned with a general panorama, but gives his space to what the others have omitted.



St. Luke waited so long to record stories he could so easily have obtained from other people by word of mouth. He was much more likely to have got his material together in the course of his travels in Asia Minor and Palestine, where he had endless opportunities for meeting people who had seen and heard Christ, as well as for checking their stories by the official narrative which formed the substance of the preaching of all the Apostles. Much-told stories have a way of shaking down into a particular pattern; and this pattern is reproduced by St. Matthew, St. Mark and St. Luke. But it does not follow that they were borrowing it from each other. The "pattern" was in the oral preaching which they all reproduced, or rather, from which each selected what he decided to reproduce.

*Selection.* This factor of selection is important. None of the Evangelists claimed to write a complete story of Christ—indeed, St. John, the last of them, tells us that this would be impossible: "There are many other things which Jesus did; which, if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written" (John xxi. 25). The problem before St. Luke was (a) to give a good general view of Christ's life and teaching: this meant including all the key incidents in the story such as *any* writer would be more or less bound to give; (b) to keep room for material which, as far as he could ascertain, was not yet recorded in any widely accepted work; and (c) to select what best served his own particular purpose in writing. Two things characterize St. Luke's special standpoint: his stress on the compassion of God towards sin and sorrow; and his strong sense of the Gospel as something meant for all mankind, its universal character. These various considerations account for his selection of material. Any-

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thing of secondary interest would be deliberately left out, especially if he had reason to suppose that anyone else had already recorded it.

Now, when St. Luke reached Palestine with St. Paul in A.D. 56, St. Mark's Gospel was probably quite newly in circulation in distant Rome, and so not within his horizon. But there was a written narrative circulating in Palestine, St. Matthew's Gospel, though as St. Matthew had written it in Aramaic, St. Luke could not read it. But he could easily have got someone to give him a list of its contents, and this would help him to decide what to leave out. Besides, St. Matthew leaned heavily towards matters of special interest to the Jews, while St. Luke's interests were, most naturally, in those aspects of Our Lord's life of universal appeal to all mankind. He therefore gives a good "bird's-eye view" of the story of Jesus, while keeping room for incidents left out by St. Matthew and which illustrate the universal scope of Our Lord's teaching—His significance for all mankind.

*St. Luke's Treatment.* St. Luke's treatment then is governed by his point of view: he gives a picture of the Universal Saviour. This is one outstanding characteristic of his Gospel, a thing too that marks its kinship with the thought of St. Paul. Part of St. Luke's purpose appears to be to trace out those elements in Our Lord's life and teaching which underlie the special teaching of St. Paul. We shall recur to this in greater detail presently.

On a rather different level, St. Luke, when he handles the same material as St. Matthew, treats it in quite a different way. St. Matthew tends to bring together all that Our Lord said upon a given topic. St. Luke tends to split it up. It is as if he asked himself, "Now, exactly when was this said?" Whenever he can find out, he tells us the incident which led up to a particular saying. When

he cannot, he gives the sayings jumbled together in a string, without much connection between them, so that they sound rather like extracts from a Dictionary of Proverbs.

We must not of course imagine that Our Lord used the same set of words only once, or even the same parable.<sup>1</sup> No teacher who knows his job does that, and Our Lord was a supremely competent Teacher. Hence an Evangelist might know of several versions of the same saying, uttered very possibly on different occasions, and choose one in preference to another. His choice would be decided by the object he had in view. For instance, he might wish, on other grounds, to record the incident which gave rise to one particular form of the saying; or he might decide that this was the clearest expression which Our Lord gave to some truth which He drove home on more than one occasion. It is in this work of selection that the independence of the Evangelists mainly comes out. From the common body of facts about Our Lord, each chose out what suited his own aim and purpose.

Besides all this, there is the question of literary style. St. Luke is the one real stylist of the New Testament, the only one of its eight writers who could turn out elegant and polished Greek. In this he makes a particularly strong contrast with St. Mark, who reproduces the vigorous colloquial manner of St. Peter's preaching. This difference largely disappears in translation, though we can recognize the more skilful build of the sentences, and the general artistry of St. Luke's picture as a whole.

*St. Luke and Our Lady.* An outstanding example of St. Luke's method of selection is the narrative he gives us of the childhood both of Our Lord and of John the Baptist.

<sup>1</sup> See end of chapter for a fuller Note on Variant Accounts.

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That his informant was Our Lady herself lies almost on the face of things. And the reason why he passed over St. Joseph's complementary narrative is simply that he knew it had already been given by St. Matthew. There is a further touching detail. St. Luke, the one stylist of the New Testament, who renders the common narrative of the Apostles into the best Greek he could command, leaves Our Lady's story in its native idiom. He gives a literal rendering of what is clearly an Aramaic original, with all it had of a ruggedness foreign to Greek ideals of style. Few things so bring home to us the intense veneration accorded to the Virgin Mother of God by the first Christians as this homage paid by a great literary artist to her very words.

The situation, as we can spell it out, was something like this. There were only two people who could testify to the events surrounding Our Lord's Incarnation and birth: St. Joseph and Our Lady. Realizing the importance of his evidence, St. Joseph left a record of it, either with Our Lady, or possibly with a near relative. There was a special reason for this document: reading between the lines we can see that St. Joseph, her legal husband, was concerned to establish Mary's Virginity. This narrative, which included a genealogy of St. Joseph (he was a near kinsman of Our Lady and like her of David's line) was handed to St. Matthew when he began to collect information about Our Lord for which he could not personally vouch, or which no living person could supply. During the lifetime of Our Lady, it was St. Joseph's vindication of her which it was important to publish.

But St. Joseph's story is obviously one-sided. To a select audience, of whom one would certainly be St. John, Our Lady privately related the story of the Incarnation—it is no sort of accident that her protector St. John is pre-eminently the Evangelist of the Word Made Flesh.

Very naturally then she would be asked to allow a written record to be made of her story. Equally naturally, she would stipulate that it should not be made public in her lifetime. Moreover, if, as seems most probable, St. Luke came into contact with her, there might be a very reasonable feeling that he, as a doctor, was the best person to be entrusted with this delicate task. Indeed, one is left speculating as to whether some discussion of this kind may not have given him his first idea of writing a life of Our Lord. Modesty might at first suggest that it should be left to Apostles, that even literary talent was not an adequate qualification. It would take, one would think, rather strong pressure to persuade anyone not an Apostle to undertake such a task.

This precious document, if we are right, was kept as private as possible till the death of Our Lady, though St. Luke's knowledge of its existence, perhaps his possession of a copy, had set his mind working on the subject some years before he felt quite ready to begin the work. Apart from St. Luke's own feelings, veneration for Mary would prevent any hasty publication on her death. Even St. Peter apparently left for Rome without a copy (to be sure, his departure from Jerusalem was somewhat hurried). At any rate, he contents himself, through St. Mark, with a short but strong affirmation of the fact of the Incarnation, without going into details (Mark i. 1.) St. Matthew's Gospel, still circulating in Aramaic, was not called in and expanded to contain the new material, possibly because it had already been allocated to St. Luke as the suitable person to give it to the world. In this way, St. Luke was the first compiler of a life of Our Lord to turn up in Palestine after this priceless but hitherto unpublished document could fittingly be made public. It contained, Jewish fashion, a genealogy of Our Lord back to David; and the only addition which St. Luke

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apparently allowed himself to make was to trace David's descent back to Adam, and so establish Our Lord's claim to call Himself not only Son of David but Son of Man. It is the Universal Saviour who specially interests St. Luke.

Why was this document not kept for St. John? Everyone must surely have hoped that some day the Beloved Disciple would give the Church his own story. In the first place, St. John showed himself in no hurry to write his memoirs. In the second, it does look rather as if St. Luke had been selected for this particular task, because he could bring that combination of scientific detachment and delicacy of touch which makes a good doctor such a comforting person to have around in times of stress. And as a doctor he had, what no other respectable man had in those days, access to the women's world. We should know very much less about the share of women in the events of Our Lord's life, and in the early spread of Christianity, had not St. Luke been there to write observantly about them. For naturally he knew more about them than any other man in the inner circle of the first Christian leaders; and it is a striking fact that he (obviously!) found them interesting beings.

At any rate, though St. Luke was accorded this high privilege, he was very careful not to trespass in any other way on information exclusive to St. John. He in no way forestalls the Apostle's personal knowledge—it is St. John, for instance, who gives us our clearest picture of Mary at the Foot of the Cross. Further, it is possible that St. John had left Palestine before A.D. 56, when St. Luke came there with St. Paul, and so would not be available for questioning. And as we saw, St. Luke liked his evidence firsthand. But he seems to have come to Palestine on this occasion with the plan of a Gospel already in his mind, and with some material collected towards it.

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It is therefore possible that what gave him his first idea was the committal to him of Our Lady's story on an earlier visit.

*"Peculiar to St. Luke."* We can now understand something of St. Luke's personal point of view in writing, and also of how he came to embody a surprising amount of information given by neither of the other Synoptists. All the same, incidents "*peculiar to St. Luke*" are apt to be peculiar in the sense that we can hardly imagine the Gospels without them. Think of the Parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, for instance. Then there is the trial before Herod, Our Lady's narrative of the Infancy, the story of the Good Thief (St. Luke has a marked interest in repentance), the widow of Naim and the incident of Martha and Mary (he had an equally marked interest in women). He also tells us more about the Samaritans than we learn from any other Gospel; and nearly the whole episode of Our Lord's tour in Peraea, on the far side of Jordan, is related by him alone. And this is not a complete list of the "*peculiar*" passages. If we think them over, they tell us quite a lot about St. Luke himself.

**THIS WEEK'S READING.** The Gospel according to St. Luke.

It is rather long to read at a sitting; but if you possibly can, try not to divide it into more than three sections: (a) up to St. Peter's Confession (ix. 18-22). This enables us to appreciate with especial force the way the next section opens with Our Lord's teaching on His coming Death. St. Luke, who does not relate the rebuke to St. Peter, yet brings out more strongly than the other Synoptists the bearing of the Transfiguration on this difficulty felt by all the Twelve; for he alone tells us the subject on which Moses and Elias spoke with Our Lord; (b) with this in mind we can approach the second section—up to Our Lord's arrival in Jerusalem just

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before Palm Sunday—with a clearer sense that it forms a definite phase; and (c) Holy Week and after—but remember that for the full Ascension narrative we have to go on to Acts.

**TO THINK ABOUT.** (1) St. Luke was a doctor. Can you detect any influence of this in his narrative?

(2) Try to set in order your impressions of St. Luke's character. The evidence is: (a) the two books he wrote, both of which you have now read; (b) a few scattered allusions of St. Paul's, 2 Cor. viii. 18 (probably); Col. iv. 14; Philem. 24; 2 Tim. iv. 11. The last refers to St. Paul's final imprisonment, not the one related at the end of Acts. At this second trial St. Paul was condemned and, as we know, suffered martyrdom. (c) Tradition, which tells us that St. Luke was a Syrian, a doctor, and (perhaps) a painter. The old painting once attributed to him is, however, a good hundred years too late to be his. But the evidence of his power as a *literary* artist is there before us.

**LOOKING AHEAD.** There is a third, more difficult question, but also more important. This will occupy us next week; but you will make more of it if you keep it in mind while you are reading St. Luke this week. It is:

Can you trace St. Paul's influence in St. Luke's handling of the story of Christ? You know something now of what was peculiarly St. Paul's own in his outlook on the Gospel. Can it be said that St. Luke, who was his pupil, was replying to critics of St. Paul by showing that his special doctrines could be traced to the words and deeds of Our Lord?

**Note: VARIANT ACCOUNTS.**

The variant accounts of Our Lord's words offer a difficulty felt by many students of the New Testament, by St. Thérèse of Lisieux for instance. She, it is known, was so puzzled by the variations in the different Gospels that she spent hours in her cell copying out passages to compare them. She very sensibly concluded that a knowledge of the original tongues is necessary to harmonize the various accounts. A number of things that look like discrepancies in English or French, or even in Latin, disappear or greatly diminish in the Greek. The reason is that Greek can



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mark fine shades of meaning, especially about the passage of time, which cannot be reproduced in less rich and flexible languages.

Then too there is the fact, remarked earlier, that Our Lord as a competent teacher was bound to repeat Himself a certain amount. Especially anyone teaching by word of mouth, without the aid of books, is bound to say the same thing, more or less in the same way, in order to fix his matter in his pupils' minds. Once a really telling way of putting a point has been found, a capable teacher will use it again and again, with small variations according to the circumstances which have brought the subject up. In the Gospels, we should always notice *to whom Our Lord is speaking*, whether (a) to the Twelve in private—some of His most important teaching was heard by none save those twelve men, His chosen witnesses; (b) to His disciples, of whom there were so many that He could select seventy-two to send on a preaching tour; (c) to the multitude, attracted by His miracles and His teaching, but not fully convinced of His claims or perhaps quite clear as to what those claims were; or (d) to groups of His enemies. When we consider all this, we see how natural it is that He should have made very similar remarks on different occasions, natural too that one Evangelist should report one occasion, another another.

Further, we have to allow for the governing purpose of each writer. Each selected his material in accordance with a particular aim, so that each might find a slightly different occasion best in line with his plan. Besides this, we have to remember that in those days writing materials were expensive, so that writers had to choose much more than they do now what they would put in and what leave out—this was so well understood that there was no need to mention it. And the sheer labour of writing everything by hand served as an inducement to say only what served the particular purpose and no more. We have forgotten these things; but to recall them helps us to enter into a sort of tacit understanding between writers and readers which we have now lost. A writer expected his readers to make these allowances, above all to realize that, where others had dealt with the same subject, he would not waste paper on saying exactly the same.

Thus when we find New Testament writers showing acquaintance with the work of other New Testament writers, it is a mistake to conclude that this would lead to both saying the same thing. It was much more likely to lead the second man to say something different, unless there was some particularly strong reason for repeating what had been said before—from another

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angle, or so as to bring out some further point, or something like that.

Perhaps the most important point is this: Acquaintance is not collusion. One of the most remarkable things about the Gospels is the way each Evangelist sticks to his own story, without trying to dovetail it into other people's stories. He sticks to what he saw and heard himself, or to what was supplied to him by eyewitnesses. Hence there are in the Gospels a number of details not easily reconciled at first sight. But this plays an immense part in establishing the trustworthiness of the narrative. For it is evidence of the Evangelists' honesty, and that is the first thing we need to know about any witnesses.

It is essential that the Gospel story should satisfy the principles of evidence which experience has taught us to trust. Now, when several people witness the same incident—say a street accident—they *never* agree down to the last detail. They agree as to the main fact, and each supplies details which are difficult, or even impossible, to harmonize with other details. This kind of discrepancy is evidence that all concerned are telling the truth, to the best of their ability. Apparent disagreement in details, along with agreement as to the main fact, is the common character of reliable evidence where the witnesses are truthful persons. Exact agreement, especially exact verbal agreement, would make any sensible jury smell a rat at once; for it would point to a put-up job.

Of course, as Christians, we know on the authority of the Church that the Evangelists were in fact inspired by the Holy Ghost, so that there can be no error in their record. But "grace presupposes nature," and here grace works upon the ordinary methods used by truthful and well-informed men in telling a story deriving from more than one witness. Those who do not accept the Church's authority are entitled to ask us for proper historical evidence for our belief that the Gospels are, on the human plane, a reliable account. And in proving this reliability, the variations are almost as important as the agreements. The Evangelists accepted, and worked within, the ordinary conditions of human authorship as they existed in that period of history. It is not a paradox, but a sober principle of legal and historical evidence, that if they agreed completely in secondary details we should have less ground for receiving their narrative as a whole.

### III. PALESTINE

#### *Eleventh Week*

#### THE WISDOM FROM ABOVE

##### *The Epistle of St. James*

WE have now reached the point at which the New Testament writers show acquaintance with the work of earlier New Testament writers. Thus St. Luke knows enough of St. Matthew to avoid material which St. Matthew has used. And St. Peter's first Epistle, we suggested, may have been written in support of St. Paul against those who upset the minds of his converts in Galatia (and elsewhere).

THE EPISTLE OF ST. JAMES, to which we now come (though it may have been written rather before St. Luke's visit to Palestine with St. Paul) is full of echoes of Our Lord's teaching. This, however, need not mean familiarity with documents, for its author was one of the Twelve and had "been with Jesus." He is quite as likely to be drawing on his own memory as quoting other people; hence he is a sort of supplementary witness to the written Gospels, a further sample of the Spoken Gospel on which the Church lived for a number of years.

What concerns us most here, however, is that he also shows acquaintance with the special ideas of St. Paul. If we track these down we find that in some places St. Paul and St. James are quoting from a common source, either from the Old Testament or from the words of Our Lord. The allusions to the Old Testament are interesting, for they give an idea of the passages on which all the Apostles relied when arguing with the Jews. After eliminating these, we find also a considerable number of allusions to St. Paul's special doctrines.

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When we ask how St. James came to know so much of St. Paul, we have to remember that he and St. Peter were the first Apostles to whom St. Paul presented himself after his conversion, and after the three years in the desert where he was taught by Our Lord. (Gal. i. 18-19.) Later, St. James was present at that important conference when he, St. Peter and St. John (Gal. ii. 9) formally recognized St. Paul as an Apostle, on the same footing as themselves, appointed by Our Lord and a witness of the Resurrection. The Apostles who had "been with Jesus" could not possibly have taken such a step without making very full acquaintance with St. Paul's doctrines. Besides, St. James as Bishop of Jerusalem would be kept in touch with St. Paul's work in another way: St. Paul was something of a storm-centre, a much-discussed man, viewed with suspicion by a good many Jewish Christians. As the Bishop of those who most resented the admission of Gentiles to the Church without circumcision, St. James was bound to follow closely all that was happening in the wake of St. Paul.

Now, one thing that happened, as we gather, was that some people took St. Paul's teaching on the freedom of faith to mean that the Ten Commandments were no longer binding. St. Paul, of course, meant nothing of the kind, as indeed he had clearly taught both by word of mouth and in writing. But the very idea of freedom goes to some people's heads. Especially those bred up in pagan licence sometimes used St. Paul's teaching as an excuse for lapsing into the vices of the heathen, to the intense disgust of those brought up with Jewish strictness. There had been enough trouble over this to make a good many sober folk very dubious of St. Paul. In particular, the Epistle to the Galatians, written, as we saw, in great haste, seems to have had an upsetting effect when it was read, not by those to whom it was written

and who knew what St. Paul was arguing against, but by people who had no idea of the particular circumstances. The row over this reached such dimensions that it apparently called forth one letter from St. Peter and another from St. James, from the head of the Universal Church, and from the head of the local church most closely concerned.

Not of course that either St. Peter or St. James disagreed with St. Paul or went back on the recognition they had accorded him. But they had to take notice of the misinterpretation put upon his words. Both responded by laying strong stress upon Christian behaviour, not because St. Paul had slurred this over, but because a good many did not see how his teaching on faith led to moral conduct. It is possible, as we suggested before, that St. Peter asked St. Paul to put in writing a fuller statement of his doctrine than we get in Galatians, bringing out the link with conduct more clearly than he there had time to do. This fuller statement would be the Epistle to the Romans. St. James's Epistle may be either earlier or later,<sup>1</sup> we cannot be quite sure, and are taking it here as a matter of convenience, since it bears on the question of St. Paul's relation to Christian Jews.

St. James had a further reason for intervening. He was that one of the responsible Church leaders (the "pillars" as St. Paul calls them) who most keenly felt the claims of the ancient Law. (See Acts xv. 13-21.) That his Epistle has some connection with Galatians must be felt by anyone who has pondered both. It looks very much as if St. James considered, not that St. Paul was wrong, but that Galatians taken alone is one-sided. And so of course it is. But then, St. Paul never meant it to

<sup>1</sup> Romans was probably written in A.D. 57. St. James is rather variously dated. It cannot be later than A.D. 62, the year of its author's martyrdom. It may be as early as A.D. 56.

stand alone, and he himself, in Corinthians and Romans, filled in the very thing that St. James felt so keenly, the claim of common morality.

*Wisdom.* The key-word of St. James's Epistle seems to be *wisdom*, which in Jewish idiom covered all that we mean by morality and something more. Pagans thought of virtue as something a man did all by himself—else how could he feel pride in being virtuous? Some Jews fell into the same error, only worse; where pagans took credit to themselves for keeping the law of conscience, the Jews took credit for having been given the Law of Moses by God; and it is with these that St. Paul contends. But the best spirituality of Israel had long stressed that true goodness of heart is not something that a man can do by himself; no human effort can ensure it, it has to be a Divine gift to the humble in heart; it springs from constant Divine support and inspiration. Such a goodness the proud can never compass, for it is essentially the fruit of humility. It is this goodness, not self-reliant but God-reliant, which the Jews called *wisdom*, and which is so beautifully and searchingly analysed in the Sapiential Books (those that treat of wisdom) of the Old Testament. Read Wisdom vii. 7-30, and you will realize how well St. James judged when he selected this traditional Jewish idea as the best bridge to the thought of St. Paul. For he was concerned to make peace. (Jas. iii. 17-18.)

**ST. JAMES.** The author of this Epistle is *not* St. James the Greater, the son of Zebedee and brother of St. John the Evangelist, who in any case had been martyred before St. Peter left Rome. (Acts xii. 2.) He is James the son of Alphaeus, mentioned in all four lists of the Twelve Apostles. (Matt. x. 3; Mark iii. 18; Luke vi. 15; Acts i. 13.) He is also called "the brother (or near kinsman) of the Lord" (Gal. i. 19) and was the first Bishop of Jeru-

salem. In Acts he is the James invariably meant unless otherwise specified.

Some scholars think that his father Alphaeus is the same person as Cleophas, whom we hear of in the story of the walk to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 18); the difference would be accounted for by the difficulty of putting Hebrew names into Greek letters. In that case, St. James's mother (or stepmother) would be Mary, the wife of Cleophas, who is called the "sister" of Our Lady (John xix. 25); that is, they were either cousins or aunt and niece—obviously two daughters of the same father and mother would not be called Mary. The Jews used "brother" and "sister" where we should say cousin, uncle, aunt, nephew or niece. There was evidently a family of near relations in close touch with the Holy Family, so much so that public opinion lumped the young people together as "brothers" and "sisters"; a "James" is named among these. (Matt. xiii. 55-6). Possibly Our Lord as an only child struck His neighbours as an unimportant item in this tribe of youngsters, so that neighbourly know-alls were doubly affronted by His rise to prominence. And some at least of these relations felt responsible for His behaviour (Mark iii. 21). On another occasion (Matt. xii. 46; Mark iii. 31; Luke viii. 19) they made an attempt to assert a claim on Him greater than that of the multitude, drawing from Our Lord the lesson, never forgotten by the Church, that a call from God takes priority over family ties. (Except of course where parents are in need of their children's support; but this was not the case with Our Lady, who was clearly provided for in such a way as to set Our Lord at liberty.)

The important point is then that St. James, the author of this Epistle, was a near relation of Our Lord, one of the Twelve, and the first Bishop of Jerusalem, of whom we hear a certain amount in Acts. Beyond this, only the

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barest outline is known of his later life. As Bishop, naturally he stayed on in Jerusalem when the other Apostles scattered; tradition has it that Our Lord told them to remain in Jerusalem about twelve years, thus giving the Jews every chance to repent of their rejection of His claims. Instead, the opposition grew stronger and more unscrupulous, fanned to white heat in part by the admission of the Gentiles. It was this atmosphere of fanatical hostility which made it highly dangerous for St. Paul to visit Jerusalem, as all his friends so clearly recognized.

St. James was able to stay on unmolested until the eve of the final Jewish revolt against Rome, because his outward behaviour was sufficiently Jewish to afford some protection. His character and his ascetical life commanded respect. He spent hours in prayer in the Temple on his knees—definitely an ascetic practice, for the commoner Jewish prayer-posture was standing; at his death his knees were found to be as hard as a camel's. In the end, however, hatred of his principles swamped respect for himself as an individual, and he was stoned, a grey-haired old man who struggled to his knees under the shower of stones to pray for his murderers. If St. James had a keen sense of the value of Jewish traditions, it in no way closed his heart to the revolutionary element in the teaching of Christ.

**THIS WEEK'S READING.** The Epistle of St. James.

Note. Coming after a course of St. Paul, this Epistle may seem deceptively easy. And it is easy, in the sense of being perfectly plain. We must beware of thinking it equally easy to translate into conduct. St. James would be the last person to be gratified at being read without effect on our subsequent behaviour (Jas. i. 22). He offers scope for practice rather than for discussion.

As our last week's reading contained topics for more than



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one week's reflection, we shall suggest no new ones, but advise the reader to give any spare time in hand to St. Luke. In a book as small and crowded as this, it is practically impossible to give the Evangelists the space they deserve.

*TO THINK ABOUT.* The influence of St. Paul on St. Luke as shown in his Gospel.

### III. PALESTINE

#### *Twelfth Week*

#### GREATER GLORY THAN MOSES

##### *The Epistle to the Hebrews*

HIS adventures in Palestine seem to have left two strong impressions on St. Paul's mind: (a) It was all but hopeless now to look for the conversion of the Jews as a nation. And (b) among those individuals who had recognized Jesus of Nazareth as the Messias, the crown and fulfilment of all their history, there was beginning to be a serious danger of apostasy; pressure upon them was becoming ever more severe. And this greater pressure was due to a third factor; (c) Jewish national feeling was rising in temperature, becoming more fanatical, working up to armed revolt against Rome. When St. Paul was shipped off to Rome, about A.D. 59 or 60, the Jewish national state had only ten years more of life before its final destruction in the great siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

One hint as to how critical things were becoming is supplied by St. Luke's Gospel; he gives more fully than any other Evangelist Our Lord's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem. (Luke xix. 41-4.) Those able to "know the signs of the times" (Matt. xvi. 2-3; compare Luke xii. 54-6) must have realized with heavy hearts that the accomplishment of Our Lord's words was coming very near.

*Background.* St. Paul had all this in mind when he wrote his Epistle to the Hebrews. He had not abandoned all hope of non-Palestinian Jews, as his action in Rome shows (Acts xxviii. 17-31). And he wrote apparently before the decision with which Acts ends: "This salva-

tion of God is sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it."

Towards the hard-pressed Christian Jews of Palestine, however, St. Paul felt quite differently. For one thing, he may well have considered that he had innocently increased their difficulties, since the garbled reports of his doctrine spread by mischief-makers had helped to confuse their minds. In the circumstances, the best help he could offer them was a presentation, more full and detailed than he had yet committed to writing, of the whole relationship between the Old Covenant (Testament) whose mediator was Moses, and the New Covenant (Testament) whose Mediator is Christ.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS is not primarily meant to make new Jewish converts, but to strengthen those in danger of wavering before the bitter fanaticism whose venom St. Paul had good reason to know.

Exactly when St. Paul wrote is not known, but it was from Italy (Heb. xiii. 23-4), and presumably while the situation in Palestine was fairly fresh in his mind. During or just after his Roman imprisonment seems a likely date, say between A.D. 60 and 62. The idea might have been in his mind before he left Palestine, and matured during the voyage and the winter spent in Malta after his shipwreck. Not until settled "in his own hired lodging" (Acts xxviii. 30) was he likely to have a chance to put on paper so massive and well-planned a piece of work. Indeed, he might not have got down to it until he was at liberty again.

Yet another thing had to be borne in mind: it might injure those whom he wished to help if they were known to have received a letter from him. Hence he sends the Epistle out unsigned, though the closing verses contain a fairly broad hint. (How casually we learn that Timothy too had been in prison!) And the circumstances offered

him another very simple piece of camouflage: for once he need not write so as to be understood by Gentiles as well as Jews! Hence he could fall back on what might be regarded as his "natural" style, the style of a Jewish rabbi soaked in the ancient Scriptures and lore of Israel. It is interesting thus to have a sample of St. Paul's "native woodnotes," the language of his childhood and his race, uncomplicated by the need to make himself understood by minds formed in other traditions.

*Accused of Treason.* The pressure being brought to bear on the Jewish Christians was: "You are traitors to your own nation." Few things are harder to stand against than fervent national feeling: to accept the name of "traitor" for the sake of one's faith is perhaps the sharpest trial which Christians can be asked to face. It makes them feel "cornered" as nothing else seems able to do—all the more so as one effect of Christianity is to strengthen all wholesome human ties. Just because the Christian is a better patriot than the non-Christian, he is harrowed and cut to the quick when loyalty to his heavenly country is accounted disloyalty to his earthly country. And in such an impasse one of the strongest supports of faith (though not of course a substitute for it) is a well reasoned statement of the case for his faith. This anchors and steadies both mind and conscience, freeing the will to concentrate on the maintenance of fidelity. The struggle is thus reduced to a conflict of feelings, instead of the far more unmanageable conflict which occurs when the mind itself is divided, unsure where the truth lies and so unsure of duty.

Having seen how the charge of treason was being used as leverage to produce apostasy, St. Paul sets out to provide his "kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. ix. 3) with a solidly reasoned case. This case was in the main

## GREATER GLORY THAN MOSES

the whole history of Israel, in which again and again the Divine purpose operated, not through the majority, but through a faithful minority, "a remnant," to use the language of the ancient prophets. History was once more repeating itself; the spiritual children of those who persecuted the prophets had also rejected the Messias and now were persecuting His faithful followers. Since hope of convincing the nation as a nation must be given up, the faithful remnant must sorrowfully accept the same rejection as its Lord. "Let us go forth therefore to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach" (Heb. xiii. 13). That is the climax of the Epistle.

*Lift up Your Heads.* There was another thing. As the sky darkened, Jews of any common sense were bound to realize that rebellion against Rome could only lead to the loss of their dearest treasures, the Temple and its sacrifices. Christian Jews had Our Lord's prophecies to prepare them; yet they could hardly feel it wrong to grieve where Christ had wept. The consolation St. Paul offers is at first sight strange. "Do not grieve beyond measure," he seems to say. "These precious and beautiful things are only the shadow. You have the reality. Moses indeed established the worship of Israel according to the pattern showed him in the mount. (Heb. viii. 5.) But in Christ we have the pattern itself, no longer a copy but the original."

So he points them to the eternal order; the word "eternal" is used more often in this Epistle than in any other New Testament book save the Gospel of St. John. In doing so, St. Paul only applies the principle which Our Lord taught us to use towards all catastrophic changes which foreshadow the end of the world: "When these things (the signs of the end of the world) begin to come to pass, *look up, and lift up your heads*, because your re-

demption is at hand" (Luke xxi. 28). As we remarked when discussing the Second Advent in connection with 2 Thessalonians, every end of a world has points in common with the end of *the* world. To Jews, the fall of Jerusalem was the downfall of all that made their "world," the end of everything that gave their life its familiar meaning and point. So St. Paul bids them, who had recognized the fulfilment of their history in the coming of the Messiah, to *look up* beyond the earthly disaster and loss, to *lift up their heads* to the "heavenly vocation" which made them heirs of the "heavenly country."

*Key Ideas.* While "eternal" and "heavenly" are leading words in the Epistle, the key word is perhaps *better*. St. Paul was not trying to console them for their losses by saying, "Well anyway, it didn't amount to much." On the contrary, he felt that the specifically Jewish things, temple, sacrifice, priesthood, country and so on, were the best this world has to offer. Yet there is something better, better all along the line. Christ is better than the angels; He gives us a better hope, better promises, a better testament, better sacrifices, a better country. And the idea is constantly present when the word is not used. Thus when Abraham left the civilized comforts of Ur of the Chaldees to live in "cottages" (tents) he did so not because he thought tents were better than houses, but because "he looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. xi. 10).

St. Paul's main argument is, as we said, the history of Israel, which he had at his fingers' ends. But we shall follow the details more easily if we get a few points into focus.

First, the trouble with the Jews who rejected Christ was that they did not take their history as a whole; they talked and acted as if God's dealings with them as a

nation began with Moses. Actually their national history began four hundred years earlier, with Abraham. Naturally then St. Paul lays enormous stress on those centuries before Moses, when the Israelites were God's Chosen People, but had not yet been given the Law. In this early period too he finds his example of a form of priesthood not confined to the priestly tribe of Levi, in the story of Melchisedech, King of Salem, so briefly related in Gen. xiv. 18-20, even more briefly referred to in Ps. cix. 4.

*The Two Covenants.* The question of the covenant grows easier to follow if we realize that both Hebrew and Greek had only one word where we use two: covenant (treaty), and testament (will). St. Paul's line of thought is less confusing if we remember that he has *both* these meanings in mind. The connecting idea is that either a treaty or a will is an enactment formally entered upon and binding on those concerned. The difference is that in a will (testament) only one person is needed to make the transaction binding, whereas in a treaty (covenant) it takes two. Further, when two warring tribes made peace, they needed a go-between or *mediator* to frame the terms, which were often sealed by a sacrifice. When then God made a formal transaction with men, it could either be a treaty, with two parties agreeing through a mediator (covenant); or it could be a will, in which He acted alone (testament). In either case, both Greek and Hebrew would use the same word, and on the whole Christian usage has been to make one word—testament—serve for both transactions. But if we grasp the double circle of ideas we shall catch the drift more readily.

St. Paul uses these—to us rather complicated—notions to disentangle the really knotty point in all this: How could a covenant (treaty) once made by God ever be set aside? St. Paul's answer is: It is not really set aside, it is

fulfilled. For the original transaction with Abraham was not so much a treaty as a will; it was an inheritance which God promised, without conditions or mediator, through Abraham's descendants to all mankind. When four hundred years later God made a treaty-covenant through Moses, its object was to make preparations for carrying out the testament-will given to Abraham. The Mosaic covenant, which included the Law, was intended to educate men to the point where the inheritance could be given them. When then the inheritance was given, in Christ, there was no further need for the covenant with Moses, which had now been implemented; all it had to offer was contained, in more perfect form, in the New Testament or Covenant (both treaty and will) of which the Mediator is Jesus Christ.

Naturally too St. Paul is concerned to show the immense part played by faith in the history of Israel. God's dealings with His people had never been limited to the keeping of the Law. There had always been this element of personal reliance on God's promises to make men cling by faith to those promises through every kind of disappointment, suffering and loss. Hebrews xi is one of St. Paul's great poetic passages.

The moral section of this Epistle is shorter and more limited than is usual with St. Paul, simply because the Law had trained the Jews out of the exuberant sins which he had to correct in his Gentile converts. Jewish failings were more a kind of rigidity and harshness, in which prudence might degenerate into calculation until generous impulses were stifled. There was also a tendency to be cantankerous and pig-headed, taking their own way in disregard of proper authority. St. Paul warns them briefly about such defects as these; but after all he was not their Bishop, nor even their particular Apostle. He was the Apostle of the Gentiles, concerning himself



## GREATER GLORY THAN MOSES

with Hebrews because his ministry to the Gentiles had created difficulties even for devout Jews who believed in Christ.

**THIS WEEK'S READING.** The Epistle to the Hebrews.

The argument is so close in texture that it is difficult to suggest omissions. And if there are dry patches, these are studded with gems. St. Paul seldom wrote so many outstandingly beautiful verses in such short compass. His poetic spirit is constantly breaking through the argument.

**TO THINK ABOUT.** Make a collection of the jewel-texts with which this Epistle is studded. To vary the metaphor, just as you feel you cannot stand another minute of this sandy tract of argument, you are handed a ripe, juicy plum!

Note. No list of these texts will be given. After all, if they are not jewels or plums to *you*, there is not much point in them.

### III. PALESTINE

#### *Thirteenth Week*

#### "THOU SON OF DAVID"

##### St. Matthew's Gospel

THE great contribution of Palestinian Christianity to the New Testament is of course St. Matthew's Gospel. It is remarkable that this, the most Jewish of all the Gospels, is also the most widely popular of the Synoptists.<sup>1</sup> It is the one that people nearly always quote when they quote from memory, which is strong evidence of its power of sticking in their minds. Besides, it is the one most people have read, if they have read a Gospel at all, since it stands first in the New Testament. That alone, however, does not account for its ascendancy over memory and imagination—an ascendancy so great that you have been deliberately taken through St. Mark and St. Luke first, in order to give them a chance. There is also a sound historical reason. Though St. Matthew's Gospel in Aramaic is the earliest of all, in its Greek dress it is probably later than the two we have read.

At first sight, this popularity may seem hard to account for. One might expect St. Luke's picture of the Universal Saviour to have a wider appeal than St. Matthew's picture of the Messiah of Israel. Yet reflection suggests a reason; St. Matthew's is really the Gospel which stands closest to Our Lord. St. John, the other member of "the Twelve" to write a Gospel, wrote at the end of a long lifetime. St. Mark wrote at one remove, recording another man's impressions. St. Luke wrote as an historian approaching a venerated figure of the recent past. St.

<sup>1</sup> See note on p. 95.

## "THOU SON OF DAVID"

Matthew, in contrast with all three, writes straight out of a personal intercourse only a few years behind him, for his Aramaic version was probably completed within about thirteen years of the Ascension. He is speaking of the Beloved Master who called him out of deep degradation, with whom he ate and drank on countless occasions (indeed sealed that first discipleship by asking Him to a meal: Matt. ix. 9-13). It is this Master, watched at close quarters day after day, whose voice and look were printed on his heart and reproduced for all ages in his Gospel. One might put the difference by saying that for St. Luke Our Lord already wears a halo, while St. Matthew has that morning freshness of the days when men walked and breakfasted with God, loving Him, stirred by Him to the depths, but not yet fully recognizing Him as God. There is a freedom of intimacy in this Gospel which speaks straight to our hearts.

**ST. MATTHEW.** Like some other New Testament characters, St. Matthew seems to have had two names, one belonging to his old life and one to his new life as a follower of Jesus. In his case there was a special reason for this, since in his old life he had practised the disgraceful calling of a publican. He was then known as Levi, and is so called by St. Mark (ii. 14) and St. Luke (v. 27). When, however, the other Evangelists give lists of the Twelve Apostles, they all call him Matthew, a name meaning "the gift of the Lord." (Mark iii. 18; Luke vi. 15; and Acts i. 13). This is an example of that delicacy we have met on other occasions; for example, no Evangelist states that St. Mary Magdalen had been a prostitute; and the publicans<sup>1</sup> were classed by the Jews with prostitutes as the offscourings of humanity.

And as with the Magdalen, there may be a further

<sup>1</sup> See note at end of chapter.

reason, a desire to spare the feelings of living relations who were honoured members of the Church at the time the Gospels were written. If Levi's father, Alphaeus (Mark ii. 14) is the same as Alphaeus the father of St. James the Less and St. Jude (Matt. x. 3; Luke vi. 15-16), Levi the Publican was a black sheep in the family circle of Our Lord.

This is guesswork, for we cannot prove that in each case it was the same Alphaeus. But the identification would clear up one difficulty; it would explain why Levi-Matthew obeyed Our Lord's call so promptly. For they might have played together as boys, until Levi went wrong, so dreadfully wrong that the neighbours left his name out of the list of Our Lord's cousins (Matt. xiii. 55). This would lend a certain drama to the encounter at the toll post. Levi was doubtless used to being "cut" by his relations, and when he saw this newly famous cousin coming towards him he may have steeled himself to meet scorn with scorn—now that his old playfellow was reputed a prophet he would be more contemptuous than anyone else. Instead, he heard the unbelievable words, "Follow Me." Yet they carried conviction. He dropped everything and went after Jesus. If this be correct, we can understand why the other Evangelists politely distinguish Levi the Publican from Matthew one of the Twelve. But their kindly intention was foiled, for Matthew himself "blew the gaff." Just as we found St. Peter harder on himself than others are on him, so we find St. Matthew associating the new name of his regeneration with his old life of infamy: he alone writes himself down as "Matthew the publican" (Matt. ix. 9 and x. 3).

We know very little of St. Matthew's later life, save that he wrote a Gospel in Aramaic, which was afterwards translated into Greek. When or by whom this was done we do not know, though various indications place it in

the first century. He is not the only Jewish writer of this period whose work was thus translated; the historian Josephus tells us that he wrote his *Wars of the Jews* first in Hebrew (i.e. Aramaic, the spoken language of the Jews of that period). As with St. Matthew, only the translation has survived, in each case so well done that it reads like an original composition in Greek. St. Matthew's original Aramaic version got into the hands of heretics, who tampered with it in various ways, and this heretical Aramaic Gospel was still to be found in a library in the days of St. Jerome (fourth century) but has since disappeared. A not perfectly certain tradition says that St. Matthew preached in Abyssinia and was there martyred. His Gospel is his great memorial.

COMPOSITION OF ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL. While in general we are not concerning ourselves with controversy, we have to make an exception here, because we may come across non-Catholics who make certain assumptions about St. Matthew's Gospel irreconcilable with the Church's teaching, and it may be well to be able to indicate the grounds which invalidate those assumptions.

The earliest recorded tradition about St. Matthew uses an expression which some non-Catholic scholars have interpreted too narrowly. This earliest tradition was written down, like the one referring to St. Mark, by Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, whose lost work is quoted by the historian Eusebius in the fourth century.<sup>1</sup> Eusebius's quotation runs as follows: "So, then, Matthew wrote the *logia* in the Hebrew language, and everyone interpreted them as he could." Now, the primary meaning of *logia* is oracles, that is, inspired utterances. But the word is also used in a broader sense to describe a record containing both utterances and historical or bio-

<sup>1</sup> See footnote, p. 67.

graphical material as well. Certain non-Catholic scholars, insisting on the narrow primary sense, have suggested that St. Matthew only made a collection of Our Lord's sayings, which someone else combined with St. Mark's collection of His doings, and some further material, such as St. Joseph's story of the Infancy. This is not only out of line with the Church's teaching but with the historical evidence. There is no sound reason for limiting the meaning of *logia* in this fashion. And also this theory creates a major difficulty—it fails to account for the unity of purpose running through this Gospel. Further, that unity comes from its stress on Our Lord's Messiahship. Naturally, it was in the early phase of the Apostolic preaching that this question was in the forefront of men's minds. Later, the question receded somewhat, so that there was less and less need for anyone to piece together material from several sources in such a way as to emphasize this particular point. An early date for St. Matthew's Aramaic original, and its substantial reproduction in the Greek translation, are thus the conclusions which satisfy the evidence.

Later, Christ's Messiahship became, not quite an antiquarian question, but certainly a secondary one. It is always important to the Church to prove that she is the lawful heir of God's promises recorded in the Old Testament. But just as a family is not concerned to be always proving its title-deeds, but prefers to live happily in its lawful house and garden, getting all the good possible out of them, so the interest of Christians moved away from this question of the Church's title-deeds, and centred more and more on Our Lord's Divinity. We see this process at work in the New Testament. One of the things that marks St. Matthew's Gospel as early is its preoccupation with the question of the Messiah. Naturally this was the first great point which the Apostles had to establish

## "THOU SON OF DAVID"

as against the Jews. But it grew less and less preoccupying; with every year that passed interest was shifting away from this to other things. Looking back on it now it becomes harder and harder to conceive of a later writer troubling to patch together earlier writings in order to prove this very primitive point. And it is hardest of all to suppose that such patchwork would produce the artistic unity which in fact we find in this Gospel.

**THE CHURCH AND HER SCRIPTURES.** It is necessary to develop this rather dull point at some length because this is now the chief point of disagreement between Catholic and non-Catholic scholars on the subject of the Synoptic Gospels. Catholic students are entitled to a little explanation as to how this has come about. The reason is that non-Catholic scholars approach the whole subject in terms of written sources. They are apt to assume that the Church at large had no reliable information about Our Lord until it was written down for them. Finding therefore that practically the whole of St. Mark's story is given by St. Matthew, and most of it by St. Luke as well, non-Catholic scholars have concluded that St. Mark's Gospel must have been the first written of the three. And since St. Luke and St. Matthew have a number of sayings of Our Lord in common, they conclude that there must have been an earlier written collection of Our Lord's sayings from which to copy. The quotation from Papias, which we gave just now, can be twisted into the service of such a theory *provided* that *logia* cannot mean anything but "inspired utterances." But this is just where the case breaks down. And all the other real evidence that we have is quite definite: St. Matthew's Gospel was written before the other Synoptic Gospels.

The Catholic approach is different. The Church, with an authoritative body of teachers, the Apostles, was in the field a number of years before the New Testament

began to be written. To carry conviction, it was necessary for the Apostles to do two things: (a) they must all tell the same story, yet (b) each one must be free to give his independent evidence in his own way. Underlying the New Testament then is this agreed body of information about Our Lord, which yet each Apostle presented his own fashion, according to the needs of his audience. Indeed, we find Papias making exactly this point about St. Peter: "For he (Mark) had neither heard the Lord nor followed Him; but subsequently, as I have said (attached himself to) Peter, who used to frame his teaching so as to meet the wants of his hearers, and not as making an orderly account of the Lord's oracles." (The reference to order means that on one or two points St. John, who you will remember is the authority behind Papias, arranges events in a different order from St. Mark's.) Each of the Synoptists then draws upon this common body of information about Our Lord, but each selects the incidents which best suit his purpose, and each exercises some freedom in grouping his selected material. While a general time-sequence is observed by all, they are not all equally concerned with the exact order of minor details. St. Matthew in particular groups the teaching of Our Lord so as to bring together what He said on any given subject.

It is obvious, once we reflect, that this fundamental divergence is bound to affect the judgment of scholars when it comes to their assessment of evidence. "The eye sees what it brings the power of seeing." Protestant and agnostic scholars are looking for documents and their relationship with other documents; they see all the evidence in the light of this preoccupation; and the resulting subordination of the evidence to their preoccupation leads to conclusions at times at variance with the evidence itself. Catholic scholars on the other hand begin with a true picture of the relation between the Church



and her Scriptures. They recognize that, before a word of the New Testament was written, Christians had access to accurate information about Our Lord in the Spoken Gospel set forth by all the Apostles. This Spoken Gospel by force of being spoken, tended to "shake down" into a common form for at least the most popular stories; hence when the written accounts begin, this common form appears in them all. Having thus got the single most important fact in its proper place, central to and governing all the rest, Catholic scholars find that the remaining evidence falls easily and naturally into its place. Their difficulties occur only where there is no evidence, as for instance about the date of 1 Peter, or when the evidence can be interpreted in more than one way, as over the date of Galatians. For the most part, the central fact clears their path so that they can take the evidence in its simple, natural sense without finding themselves in difficulties. What Catholic and non-Catholic scholars disagree about is, fundamentally, not the date of St. Matthew's Gospel; it is the relationship between the Church and the Scriptures.

**CHARACTERISTICS.** We have mentioned several important ones incidentally but perhaps had better sum up a little. First, St. Matthew's plan appears to be to bring together in solid blocks Our Lord's teaching on a given topic. This, which is helpful to the general reader, is less helpful to scholars, whose job is so largely with the time-sequence: "When did this happen?" is their constant question. As was pointed out earlier (see p. 108), Our Lord must have repeated Himself a certain amount; and in any case St. Luke is the only one of the Synoptists who promises us a story set forth "in order" (Luke i. 3). The others accept a general framework of the main events within which they feel themselves at liberty to arrange

minor details as suits their purpose. St. Matthew's method makes a harmonious whole which, as we remarked earlier, is "definitely memorable"; his is the Gospel which has most sunk into the memories of ordinary Christians. And that is a very valuable result.

His special tricks of style are not of much interest save to those who know Greek. Only one deserves mention because it comes out in translation—indeed, it is probably due to the fact that our *Greek* Matthew was translated from the Aramaic: where the other Evangelists speak of "the kingdom of God," St. Matthew uses an Aramaic idiom, "the kingdom of heaven." The Jews had for centuries shrunk from pronouncing the Divine Name YAHVEH. Instead, they used various alternatives, such as "Adonai," which means "lord." In Our Lord's time some of them were getting shy of using even as direct an expression as "Adonai," and were saying "Heaven" when they meant God. (Just as nowadays people will say "Heaven knows!" when they mean "God knows!") Our Lord, speaking in Aramaic, may have conformed, at least on occasions, to this usage, inspired as it was by reverence; and in that case He would have said, "the Kingdom of Heaven," meaning of course the Kingdom of God. When, however, the Gospel was preached to pagans and in Greek, this phrase was unintelligible or even misleading: some pagans might take "heaven" to mean simply "the sky." Hence it was better to use the plain Greek word for "God" about which there could be no such confusion. But St. Matthew, writing before the preaching to pagans had developed on a great scale, used what was to his Jewish hearers the familiar expression, "the Kingdom of Heaven."

The outstanding characteristic of St. Matthew's Gospel is, however, that it presents Our Lord as the Son of David, the Messiah promised to Israel, in whom all the

prophecies had been fulfilled. That is why there are so many quotations from the Old Testament—seventy, while the other Evangelists have only fifty between the three of them. Indeed, St. Mark and St. Luke hardly quote from the Old Testament, except when they are recording a quotation from the lips of Our Lord (though as we said St. Luke has rather a liking for quotations about God's mercy to the Gentiles). This is because neither of them is arguing from the Old Testament. But St. Matthew is constantly doing so, and as St. Jerome pointed out long ago, he is apt to quote from the Hebrew Scriptures, whereas other New Testament writers generally have in mind the Greek translation, the Septuagint, with which Gentile Christians were more familiar. Writing too for Jews, St. Matthew does not stop to explain Jewish words and customs as St. Mark does. And because of his emphasis on Christ's Messiahship, St. Matthew is severe towards the national leaders who brought about His rejection by the nation.

And yet, he certainly had not a "one-track mind." He gives us the story of the Magi, for instance, with its hint that the Hope of Israel is also the Hope of the World. He flung himself into the first task that lay before the Apostles, that of trying to win the Jewish nation. By doing so, he secured us something very precious—that sense of the Gospel as not "in the air," but rooted in the soil of a loved country and all its homely ways. Because it thus arose in connection with one history, one land and its full heritage of tradition, it has the power to find a home with every people and become part of the living texture of their inheritance.

**THIS WEEK'S READING.** St. Matthew's Gospel.

Like St. Luke, it is rather long to attempt at a single sitting, but try to tackle it as a whole. If you can do it in two readings, remember as before that St. Peter's Confession in chap. xvi is the climax of the first half of the narrative in all

## ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

three Synoptists; only when His Divinity is thus recognized does Our Lord go on to teach His coming Death. St. Matthew gives us the most complete account of this great turning-point, for he alone includes St. Peter's Commission as the Rock.

If you want shorter sections take it like this:

Chaps. i-iv: Preliminaries.

v-vii: The Sermon on the Mount.

viii-xviii: In Galilee.

xix-xxv: In Peraea and Jerusalem.

xxvi-xxviii: The Passion and Resurrection.

**TO THINK ABOUT.** You have already read St. Mark and St. Luke. Try then if you can yourself pick out those incidents and sayings which are given by St. Matthew alone. There is St. Joseph's story of the Infancy to lead off with, and the larger part of the Sermon on the Mount. A list is given in Appendix A; but have a sporting shot at making your own first.

**Note: THE PUBLICANS.**

Our modern tax-collectors give us no idea of what was meant by a publican. In the Roman Empire the whole business was differently managed. A tax-collector got no salary; instead, he paid the government for the right to collect taxes in a certain area. Every region, from the largest to the smallest, was assessed for taxation at a certain sum; the census, during which Our Lord was born, was a preliminary survey before working out the taxes due from everybody. The government then farmed out the right to get the money in. Generally a rich man would buy the right to gather the taxes in a certain district, then farm it out in smaller lots to smaller men. Each tax-farmer (publican) thus had to get in enough to foot three separate bills. He had (a) to forward to the government the assessed amount of taxes; (b) pay the government or the man above him for the right to collect the money; and (c) get a livelihood for himself. Provided he paid items (a) and (b) on the nail, no questions were asked as to how much he was raking in under (c). A tax-farmer thus had to extort about three times the actual amount of the government taxes in order to make a living—and many made fortunes out of it. No wonder they were hated. And among the Jews that hatred gained a special edge from patriotism and religious fervour. The publican was the man who had sold the Chosen People of God for money. Indeed, he often grew rich on his treason.

## PART FOUR

# LATER EPISTLES, MAINLY ST. PAUL'S

- (a) FROM A ROMAN PRISON
- (b) ST. PAUL AT LIBERTY AGAIN
- (c) APOSTOLIC FAREWELLS: THE SHADOW OF MARTYRDOM

### IV. (a) FROM A ROMAN PRISON

#### *Fourteenth Week*

#### "THE FULLNESS OF THE GODHEAD"

##### Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon

WE now come to the Epistles which St. Paul wrote after the period covered by the Book of Acts, or during those last two years when he was awaiting his trial in Rome. (Acts xxviii. 30.) Those two years were probably from A.D. 59 to 61. St. Paul was comfortably lodged and decently treated, but under close guard; he lived chained to a soldier. St. Luke seems to have remained with him the whole time, doubtless busying himself writing his Gospel and the Acts. Timothy was with him part of the time, but later was sent away by St. Paul to supervise the church in Ephesus. Others of his special band of helpers came and went. For St. Paul still kept up his oversight of the churches he had founded, though now by intermediary.

Everyone must remark the change of tone in this group of Epistles, written from his prison in Rome. There is much less controversy, and it is handled obliquely. Pervading the whole group is an amazing serenity, as if the Apostle were now watching the world from a great height—as in a sense he was. Not with any cold aloofness to—

## EPISTLES TO THE COLOSSIANS; PHILEMON

wards those involved in the heat of the combat, but with quiet, unshakable confidence that "Christ is all, and in all" (Col. iii. 11).

The order in which they were written appears to be not quite certain, so we shall take them in the order which gives easiest entry to this new height of thought and confidence. For the thought often soars so high that we can hardly follow. Doctrinally these short Epistles are amongst the most important of St. Paul's writings. Their theological wealth is dazzling.

**TO THE COLOSSIANS.** This Epistle is written to a church founded, not personally by St. Paul, but by some of his converts. Someone named Archippus had apparently founded, or at least was in charge of, the church in a fairly important town of Phrygia called Laodicea. (Col. iv. 16-17.) There is a slight sharpness in St. Paul's tone here which reminds us that at a later date the church of Laodicea fell into lukewarmness and was sternly rebuked by St. John. (Apoc. iii. 14-22.) However, at this earlier time they had had zeal enough to carry the Faith to a small neighbouring town, Colossae, or possibly this was due to the personal zeal of a man named Epaphras. (Col. i. 5-8.) Epaphras had visited Rome, possibly to report to St. Paul and ask his advice about certain difficulties. At least, he did not return to Colossae with this Epistle (Col. iv. 12-13), which was carried by Tychicus and Onesimus (iv. 7-9). There was a special reason why Onesimus was going to Colossae at this time to which we shall come in due course.

*The First Heresies.* Besides the general change of atmosphere in these later Epistles of St. Paul, there is another striking change—the controversy with the Jews is receding into the background and only incidentally present; controversy, so far as it occurs, turns mainly on errors of

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doctrine due to pagan influences. Not that the Jews had ceased troubling the Church; they had been badgering the Colossian Christians about observing special festivals and ritual rules about food (Col. ii. 16-17), and of course about the question of circumcision (ii. 11). But St. Paul deals with these by a new method; instead of arguing out the case he sets before them all they have as members of the Body of Christ. And this too is the method he opposes to the new heresies of heathen origin.

The heart-hungry pagan world was honeycombed with mystical sects which tried to cater for the spiritual yearnings of the people. These varied greatly, from serious philosophical schools whose best thought was rescued by Christian thinkers, to the crudest charlatanism often allied with gross immoralities. To many, Christianity at first looked like one more of these philosophico-mystical sects. And the sects themselves showed a tendency to borrow scraps of Christianity to mingle with their doctrines.

"Doctrine" is, however, too solid a word to apply to the fluid ideas and practices of these people. At bottom, there was more often a mood than an idea, a mood of weariness with a world which offered so much and gave so little. Life appeared a great cheat. Naturally then they felt that God, the real God who lay somewhere behind these shadows, could not have anything to do with the world as they knew it. He could not, for example, have created it. Therefore it must have been created by beings less than God. And this, they claimed, was more reverent than to attribute to God the origin of a world so unsatisfying as this. Hence they built up a great scheme of intermediate beings, which they called by all sorts of high-sounding names—thrones, dominations, principalities, powers, for instance (Col. i. 16)—or just simply angels. They were very ready to give Our

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Lord a place among these intermediate beings, and pointed out to the Christians how much more humbly reverent this was than supposing that God had any direct contact with this evil world in which we live. As, however, these intermediate beings were powerful, they were accorded worship. But as they were not infinitely good, this worship did not always involve a pure life. All systems that put a great gulf between God and the world tend to encourage mankind in self-indulgence; for how can self-indulgence matter when it belongs to a low sphere in which God is not interested?

And all this, be it remembered, was more an atmosphere than a system. Every wandering lecturer who gathered a band of disciples had his own system, different from the others. It was against this fact of variation that Christians first became aware of the implications of their own unity; in the next century the Greek word *catholicos* (universal) was selected to underline the thing that marked Christianity off from these sects. Their fluidity makes discussion very difficult, but later they were given the general name of Gnostics; for they promised *gnosis* (knowledge of the invisible God) to those who would practise certain disciplines. These disciplines were intended to raise them above this low world with which the real God has nothing to do (and which therefore need not bother to obey Him). The Gnostic heresies troubled the Church for over a hundred years, when they were at last decisively answered by St. Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, who died in A.D. 202.

*The Image of the Invisible God.* St. Paul's answer of course is that the real God does come into contact with this world of our daily life. He created it Himself, and did not leave it to intermediaries. More, He has become incarnate as Man, so that in Christ the "invisible God"



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of the Gnostics lived our life, with all it holds of humiliation and disappointment. Nor was even that all. He who gave us the world has now given us the Church, not as something separate from Himself but as part of His Divine life, "the fullness of Him who is filled all in all," as St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians (Eph. i. 23). The words "fullness" and "all" wherever they occur are the key to St. Paul's answer to these early foreshadowings of Gnosticism.

Note especially the word *all*, which recurs again and again in this Epistle. Every time St. Paul is insisting that it is not necessary to go outside Christ to obtain any advantage whatsoever, for in Him we have all, given to us because in Him we are directly united to the Invisible God after whom the Gnostics groped. Christ is the first-born (better, the first-begotten) of *every* creature, in whom were *all* things created; He is before all, and by Him all things consist; in all things He holds the primacy, for it pleased the Father that in Him all fullness should dwell; in Him then we have all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. . . . One gets the feeling that the Christians of Colossae had been twitted as simpletons, content with very dull, pedestrian ideas when a fascinating world of really lofty thought was open to them! St. Paul makes it clear that Christianity does not have to borrow loftiness or fascination from anybody. For there is nothing to be had outside Christ, the head of all principality and power.

*Risen with Christ.* His answer on the issue of morals is on the same plane. If we believe that this life of ours is something so low that God has nothing to do with it, then naturally we shall commit the sins catalogued in Col. iii. 5-9. But since we are "risen with Christ" (iii. 1) we are already in a fashion in heaven. Hence we must

"mind the things that are above" (next verse). Indeed, St. Paul makes the astounding claim, as the root, be it observed, of Christian morals: "You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (iii. 3). What, then, has Gnosticism to offer us? We have all it promises, and much more, not in the future according to the Gnostic offer, but right here and now in the present. From this comes the uncompromising demand: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth" (iii. 5).

An interesting section of his moral counsels deals with mutual duties; wives to husbands and husbands to wives; children to parents and parents to children; slaves to their owners and owners to their slaves. The word translated "servants" (iii. 22) is really "slaves." From these, regarded with contempt as beneath all possibility of moral conduct, St. Paul asks the high standard outlined in verses 22-5. But he has a word for the masters in the next chapter, and after that we soon come to Onesimus—with good reason, for he was a runaway slave whom St. Paul was sending back to his master Philemon.

THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON is a short but exquisite letter to a member of the Church in Colossae, to ask him to receive back Onesimus. Reading between the lines, we find that Onesimus had done worse than merely run away; he had robbed his master and bolted—to Rome ultimately, perhaps because he felt the big city was the easiest place in which to hide. There he came across St. Paul and was converted by him: "my son, whom I have begotten in my bands . . . whom I would have retained with me, that in thy place he might have ministered to me in the bands of the Gospel" (Philem. 10-13). When, however, St. Paul grasped the whole story, he made Onesimus go back to his master, promising himself to refund the stolen money (verses 18-19). He bases his plea to Philemon

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on the fact that in Christ he and his slave are now brothers. . . .

Who could have resisted such delicate pleading? Not Philemon apparently, since he made this private letter public to the Church. . . . It is an example of what St. Paul meant when he insisted to the Colossians (iii. 11) that in Christ "there is neither bond nor free." This little Epistle lets in light on the influence of Christianity on slavery. The first step was to make the slave a person to whom it was obviously unfair to deny his human rights; to deliver him from servility so that men became ashamed of keeping him in servitude. . . . Both this Epistle and Colossians carried St. Paul's personal signature (Col. iv. 18; Philem. 19). But the signature of his heart and mind is in every word.

**THIS WEEK'S READING.** The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon.

**TO THINK ABOUT.** No special question will be propounded. Just soak your mind in the new atmosphere, trying to get the hang of St. Paul's big ideas on Our Lord and the Church, and how being "in Him" underlies our whole moral and spiritual life. The more fully you can enter into this new thought-world, the easier you will find the entry into that treasure-house of his mature theology, the Epistle to the Ephesians. As St. Paul's thought unifies, it becomes harder and harder to isolate bits of it for special consideration. Try to get the unity, the whole.

## IV. (a) FROM A ROMAN PRISON

### *Fifteenth Week*

#### CITIZENSHIP IN HEAVEN

##### The Epistle to the Philippians

IN PHILIPPIANS the personal note is once more uppermost, almost more so than in any other of St. Paul's writings, unless perhaps his letters to his "son" Timothy (who gets a warm encomium in this Epistle, Phil. ii. 19-30). It is a darling Epistle—there is no other word for it—written for sheer love's sake, without any errors to correct or any need to scold for bad behaviour. The only trace of that (Oh, hush!) is that perhaps there was a tiny spirit of quarrelsomeness in Philippi. At least, St. Paul lays rather suspicious stress on "being of one mind in the Lord." There were even two ladies, Evodia and Synteche, who apparently did not quite see eye to eye over everything (iv. 2)—as it might be Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Smith not able to agree perfectly about how the canteen should be run, or the club. But considering the faults St. Paul had at times to take up, and the general run of his warnings, that is a trifle indeed. The church in Philippi seems to have been, as nearly as is possible to human frailty, an ideal church.

*A Letter of Thanks.* This is the only time we find St. Paul writing for no other purpose than to thank his friends for their kindness. The Philippians had early made it their business to look after his wants. When he left them after his first visit to go to Thessalonica (Acts xvi. 9-xvii. 1), they sent after him (Phil. iv. 15-16) to relieve his neces-

sities. Now they have done so again, dispatching their gift to Rome by the hand of Epaphroditus (iv. 18), whom St. Paul was sending back with our Epistle (ii. 25). There had been delay in answering, because Epaphroditus had fallen seriously ill in Rome (ii. 26-30), but now was able to travel. And St. Paul takes the opportunity to explain his attitude to such gifts. He has learned to be content with both plenty and want—"I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me"—but this does not lessen his warm gratitude to those who are so thoughtful for his needs (iv. 10-19).

*Calming Anxiety.* Another purpose is to relieve the anxiety of his friends about him, and there also to explain his own attitude. What was to be the outcome of his trial? It looks as if he expected it soon, and had faced its possible outcome (ii. 17). His friends were more grieved than he, both over his imprisonment—did it seem to them strange that God should let him be shut up when he could have done such enormous good by actively working for the spread of the Gospel?—and over his possible condemnation to death. St. Paul reassures them. His imprisonment has actually led to a more active preaching of the Word of God than would otherwise have been the case—through him it was even penetrating the court (i. 18) and Caesar's household (iv. 22). Another advantage of his imprisonment he does not mention—we owe to it these wonderful Epistles, still working after all these centuries to "the furtherance of the Gospel," in lands St. Paul never reached nor indeed heard of. As for his death, he confesses, most touchingly, that as far as he is concerned, he wants nothing so much as to be with Christ, "a thing by far the better"; but he is torn in two by another desire: "to abide in the flesh is more needful for you" (i. 22-6). Indeed, the conflict in his

mind is so sharp that it has made hay of his grammar. While the general sense is reasonably clear, these tangled, halting sentences, charged with his deepest emotion, are a puzzle to conscientious translators.

*Friendships and Fallings Away.* It is obvious, from numerous hints through all the Epistles, that St. Paul had gathered round him a wonderful band of helpers who gave him most faithful service. In this Epistle, however, for the first time, another note is struck: not all are standing firm (iii. 17-19). This note grows stronger in some of the Epistles we have yet to read. Here its effect is to make him turn more warmly to those he could trust; to Timothy and Epaphroditus: to that unnamed "sincere companion" in Philippi (iv. 3)—whose name as far as we are concerned is only in the Book of Life, though a less important person,<sup>1</sup> Clement, gets a mention: above all to the whole body of Philippian Christians, whom he begs to go on "holding forth the word of life, to my glory in the day of Christ, because I have not run in vain" (ii. 16). Were the Christians of Philippi to be his only memorial he would not feel his life wasted.

*Doctrine.* There is little direct doctrinal exposition in this Epistle. All through St. Paul treats the Philippians as people whose "citizenship is in heaven" (iii. 20) and who only need to be reminded of the fact. The English word "conversation" has altered its meaning so much since

<sup>1</sup> Less immediately important, that is, for many scholars take this as an allusion to the man who became Pope St. Clement the First, the third successor of St. Peter. You will remember him from the Canon of the Mass: "Linus, Cletus, Clement, Xystus." There is no reason why these men should not have been alive during St. Paul's imprisonment in Rome (A.D. 59-61). Indeed, we shall presently meet Linus in the New Testament (2 Tim. iv. 21). Clement would be a younger man, possibly beginning to make his mark, since his name is already mentioned. We hear of him again, not in the New Testament, however, for he wrote an *Epistle to the Corinthians* in A.D. 96, to settle a conflict that had broken out between the Christians and their clergy.

the sixteenth century that it is no longer a very useful guide to what the New Testament means. Originally it meant the whole of intercourse, manner, conduct, bearing, mutual consideration, instead of being limited to the idea of talk; and this is its usual meaning in the New Testament. But in this passage the commentators prefer the rendering "citizenship," because of a hint at the special status of the Philippians. Their city was a Roman colony, a settlement of old soldiers after their service was over, and a colony ranked as part of Rome itself. The Philippians thus were not "natives"; they lived among the surrounding populations as people who really belonged elsewhere; in status they were Romans. In the same way, St. Paul hints, Christians live on earth; but their status is that of citizens of heaven.

St. Paul for the most part takes for granted all that is implied in this idea of "citizenship in heaven," which underlies all his practical counsels. From time to time, however, he passes from practice to doctrine, instead of the other way about, and occasionally gives us a gem of theology. When for instance he wants an illustration of humility—for quarrelsomeness generally has conceit and assertiveness behind it—he finds it in the Incarnation. How can Christians be for ever demanding this or that for themselves, credit, consideration, or the chance to shine, when Our Lord has done the exact opposite? If we are to be "of one mind," we can only be so by having the mind of Christ: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery (literally, "a thing to be clung to") to be equal with God: but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant (slave) . . . He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (the slave's death). Then from this depth he

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soars up again, in one of his loftiest Christological passages. Yet the object of this wonderful piece of Christology is to put a stop to petty bickering! (ii. 1-15).

***THIS WEEK'S READING.*** The Epistle to the Philippians.

***TO THINK ABOUT.*** Select a passage and learn it by heart. If you cannot make a choice for yourself, try either Phil. ii. 1-11, or iii. 7-14.



## IV. (a) FROM A ROMAN PRISON

*Sixteenth Week*

**"IN HEAVENLY PLACES"**

**The Epistle to the Ephesians**

THIS Epistle was sent by the same bearer as the Epistle to the Colossians, Tychicus (Col. iv. 7; Eph. vi. 21), who in both passages is commended in terms so similar that it looks as if he carried both letters at the same time. Which raises an interesting possibility. For we learn in Col. iv. 16 that Tychicus did carry a second letter, only St. Paul speaks of it as addressed to the church in Laodicea, for he asks the Laodiceans and Colossians to exchange and read each other's Epistles. But no Epistle addressed to the Laodiceans has come down to us.

One suggestion is that St. Paul, having heard what Epaphras had to report about false teachers in Colossae, realized that this was a bigger question than a mistake made in one unimportant townlet. He therefore gave the Colossians a "straight" answer in terms of their particular local difficulties, and at the same time wrote out a much fuller statement of the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ and its bearings on conduct. This fuller statement he sent out as a circular, one copy to each of the important cities of Asia (the Roman name for the western province of Asia Minor), and it is this circular which we now know as the EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS. By way of corroborative fact, some early copies do not give the words "at Ephesus" (i. 1), which suggests there may have been a blank in the original copy, to be filled in with the names of several different churches. As, however, Ephesus was the leading city of Asia, copies made

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for other provinces were more likely to be made from the Ephesian copy than from those sent to other cities, and so this circular to the Asian churches came to be known as the Epistle to the Ephesians. Another thing that points the same way is the entire lack of personal greetings in this Epistle. Considering how long St. Paul had been in Ephesus, and how intimate were his relations with the Church there (Acts xviii. 19 to end of chap. xx), it is really astonishing that he should send no personal messages to anyone. And the introductory commendation would have suited any church equally well. The absence of the personal note certainly wants explaining.

This is of course simply a theory, and we must not look on it as certain fact. Yet it would shed light on these and other points. Among other things, for instance, it would suggest that St. Paul had profited by his experience over the row in Galatia. There he had corrected a local error in terms which were wrongly taken up in other places; and he had had to correct the misunderstanding by sending out a full statement of his doctrine, suitable to any locality, in the form of the Epistle to the Romans. This time therefore he sends out together the reply to the local difficulty and the full statement of the doctrine on which he based his answer. As a result, there was no trouble over Colossians such as had been caused by Galatians.

*The Middle Wall of Partition.* There is further a slender personal link. Tychicus is mentioned in Acts xx. 4 along with Trophimus as members of the deputation St. Paul had assembled to carry to Jerusalem the alms collected by his Gentile converts. Both men came from Asia, the western part of what we now call Asia Minor, and Trophimus was actually an Ephesian. (Acts xxi. 29.) Now, it was the presence of this Trophimus which actually set

match to the powder magazine in Jerusalem.. St. Paul had certainly been showing his friend round, but he had carefully observed the rule which excluded Gentiles from all but the outermost court of the Temple. This bears on a passage in our Epistle. In its full extent the Temple covered an enormous area. The outermost section was called the Court of the Gentiles, and to it anyone had access. This court was shut off from the next, the Court of the Women, by a low wall penetrated at one point by a flight of steps, which only Israelites of both sexes might pass. From the Court of the Women there was access to a still smaller court, where only males of Israel might enter, called the Court of Israel.

Lest this rule be infringed, in the main barrier-wall between the Court of the Gentiles and the Court of the Women there were several large stones, carved in Greek letters, threatening death to anyone not an Israelite who should pass this barrier. . . . Now, look up Eph. ii. 14, or better, read the whole section from verses 11 to 22. It rather suggests that the idea of Ephesus, or at least of Asia, was connected in St. Paul's mind with that scene in the Temple. This was the "middle wall of partition" which Christ had broken down, so that He might reconcile "both (Jew and Gentile) to God in one body on the cross . . . for by Him we have access (denied in the earthly Temple in Jerusalem) both in one Spirit to the Father." . . . That is St. Paul's final word on the great controversy of his life.

*The Mystical Body of Christ.* Ephesians is *par excellence* the Epistle of the Mystical Body. One would therefore expect it to become a favourite with our own age, when this same doctrine is once again coming to the fore in the thought of Christians. For like the first and second centuries, ours too is an age of false mysticisms. Some of

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them, such as theosophy, are closely akin to the Gnosticism of that earlier age, while others resemble rather its mystical deification of the state. To make our own St. Paul's doctrine in this Epistle—and that can only be done by lovingly pondering it with prayer—is to be armed against the deceptive lures of our own times.

*The Christian's Armour.* And it is as armour that St. Paul puts forward this doctrine which we are apt to think too "high" or too "mystical" for ordinary daily use. In his prison in Rome, even when it was "his own hired lodging," St. Paul lived chained by the wrist to a Roman soldier, an "ambassador in a chain" as he half-jokingly says (Eph. vi. 20). So he had ample time to study the man's equipment at close quarters.

Now, as he dictated, St. Paul looked up at this odd "Siamese twin" of his and borrowed his armour for the spiritual warfare. (I wonder what the man felt like. Surely some friendly words, chaffing or serious, passed between them. Or maybe the soldier interrupted to prevent some technical mistake. Surely too it was a fighting man, talking about his own experiences, who told St. Paul that a soldier's toughest job is not attack; it is to stand his ground under hammering by a stronger force. At least, it is the power to "take it" which St. Paul seems most anxious to inculcate.)

Just as the high mystical doctrine of the Epistle is coming to the front with us to-day, so this picture of the warrior has also come into its own; it is easier to understand in the twentieth century than at any time since armour went out of use. Any fire-fighter in the blitz can get the point of "extinguishing fiery darts." Nor does the wearer of a tin hat in the barrage need explanations about "the helmet of salvation." The whole picture has become modern and familiar once more. (Eph. vi. 10-17.)

*In Heavenly Places.* This picture of the Christian warrior begins (vi. 12) with a reference to those "principalities, powers . . . rulers of the world" and so forth which the Asian mystical sects wished to interpose between man and God. If you grasped what was said two weeks ago about these sects, you will have an idea of what St. Paul was answering. But he goes far beyond arguing against any one particular error. He uses what is always the Christian's strongest weapon—he sets forth the truth. It is this positive exposition of the "word of God" (Eph. vi. 17) which puts into our hands the sword of the Spirit. Then we need not simply stand on the defensive (though there are occasions when that is the only thing to do.) We can take the offensive, or if that is an ugly word, the initiative. It is by setting forth "what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" that we carry the war into the enemy's country, reclaiming for God regions of human life which have fallen away from Him.

The great positive truth which St. Paul insists upon again and again is what we have and are "in Christ." In Him we have "the adoption of children"; "redemption through His Blood and the remission of sins"; "all wisdom and prudence" (so that we need not run after any self-styled wisdom-monger to fill up a lack). Because we have all this, it is God's purpose "to make known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He hath purposed in Him (in Christ), in the dispensation of the fullness of times, to re-establish all things in Christ." And because we are "in Christ," we need to know "what the hope is of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." We are to take no mean view of ourselves and of our calling, not because we are anything but because our calling is everything. We are "in" that Christ whom God raised from the dead, "setting Him on His right hand

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in the heavenly places, above all principality, and power, and virtue, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come." And since we are "in Christ" we are already exalted with Him into those heavenly places; our true life is there, as St. Paul explicitly insisted to the Colossians. (Col. iii. 3). And the outcome of all this is "that the manifold wisdom of God may be made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places *through the Church*" (Eph. iii. 10). No wonder St. Paul calls this "the supernal vocation of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 14).

*Walking Worthy of Our Vocation.* But the "manifold wisdom of God" cannot be made known, either in earth or heaven, simply by talk. It calls also for deeds. The positive exposition of the truth, which is the great weapon of the Faith, is never a matter of words alone. It affects every detail of conduct. But that conduct must have its true motive and inspiration. It is not a question of slavish obedience, but of being "quickened together in Christ" (ii. 5); "strengthened by His Spirit with might unto the inward man" (iii. 16); "built together into an habitation of God in the Spirit" (ii. 22). Because Christ is He who "is able to do all things more abundantly than we desire or understand" (iii. 20), the Apostle is able to exhort us: "I, therefore, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called" (iv. 1).

At first sight, this is such a lofty programme that we may be inclined to feel it is for choice souls only. Not at all. St. Paul makes it very clear that this vocation is a vocation for everybody. It is not for the naturally good or the temperamentally spiritual. It is the normal task of every Christian. No matter how shady their past (Eph. ii. 1-7), all are eligible through "the abundant riches of

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His grace.” And those who have fallen into sin as Christians are exhorted, in the most matter-of-fact way, to “put on the new man” and get back to the job. Carrying this “supernal vocation” out in practice is everybody’s business. Half the Epistle is devoted to working this out, with a wealth of detail which at first surprises. It may never before have occurred to us that the reason we should not lie or steal or lose our tempers is that we have been “blessed with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. i. 3). It is quite a shock to think that people capable of these faults (and worse) could even be mentioned in this connection. But then perhaps we have had a rather too pedestrian, clodhopping notion of what it is to be a Christian! St. Paul does jolt us out of our ruts.

**THIS WEEK’S READING.** The Epistle to the Ephesians.

A natural division, if one is wanted, is the three chapters of doctrine and the three of morals.

**TO THINK ABOUT.** Try to work out in some detail the connection in St. Paul’s mind between his high mystical doctrine and our daily conduct.

## IV. (b) ST. PAUL AT LIBERTY AGAIN

### *Seventeenth Week*

#### "FAITHFUL SAYINGS"

##### **First Epistle to Timothy; Epistle to Titus**

ST. PAUL'S trial had the happy issue for which on the whole he hoped (Phil. i. 26; ii. 23-4), and which certainly his friends hoped. He was set free again and resumed his lifework. Of his movements in detail we have no knowledge, save a few place-names mentioned in his last Epistles. Doubtless he revisited some of the churches he had already founded, and it is with them we find him busy. But there is a very strong tradition that he carried out his plan of going to Spain, formed before his arrest in Jerusalem (Rom. xv. 24, 28) and delayed through the weary years of his imprisonment. The Paul who comes out of prison is an older man; he had been feeling his years (Philem. 9) while in captivity, and also perhaps a little brooding over the past. That he had been a persecutor of the Church had never been far from St. Paul's mind (Acts xxii. 4, 19, 20; xxvi. 9-11; Gal. i. 13; 1 Cor. xv. 9; Phil. iii. 6). But there is a keener poignancy in the last allusion (1 Tim. i. 12-18)—the only time he offers anything like an excuse for it, though even so it stands in his mind mainly as a measure of the mercy of God.

But if St. Paul's strength was failing, his sphere of responsibility was still growing. In order to cope with it, he had to delegate a further measure of authority to men he had personally trained and whom he could trust—trust above all to deal rightly with the false doctrines being sown both by Jews and pagans in the young inexperienced churches. For the first Christians lacked one



## "FAITHFUL SAYINGS"

piece of help and inspiration which grows stronger with every year that passes. To us, Christianity is something which has weathered every conceivable storm; it has stood the test of time, renewing its vitality with every fresh challenge. To the first generation it was something utterly novel and untested, a newly built ship undergoing its trials, so to speak, with no guarantee as to what its performance would be—except the Divinity of its Designer. Hence the first necessity was absolute fidelity to the Apostolic teaching; "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding the profane novelties" (1 Tim. vi. 20). And a later Epistle was to be even more emphatic: "Hold the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith, and in the love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. i. 13). "Continue thou in those things which thou hast learned, and which have been committed to thee; knowing of whom thou hast learned them" (2 Tim. iii. 14). It is the Apostolic succession which is the guarantee of doctrine.

*False Doctrine.* What we shall read this week are letters of St. Paul to two of his most trusted helpers whom he sent as, so to speak, "apostolic delegates" to churches he could not visit himself, Timothy to Ephesus, Titus to Crete. In both cases the reason why he sends them is to make a stand for true doctrine in a difficult situation. In both cases there were Jews urging on the new Christians the keeping of the ceremonial law. (1 Tim. i. 8-11; Tit. i. 10-16.) Where this failed, they tried to side-track the discussion with those fables, genealogies and foolish questions referred to in both Epistles. In addition, we get hints of the first appearance of what is later called **Manichaeism**—the doctrine that matter is evil and the source of evil. This theory is so difficult to apply logically that it is generally applied illogically, by saying that

some one particular material thing or act is wrong, marriage, for instance, or eating flesh meat. (1 Tim. iv. 1-6.) Against this, St. Paul is found insisting that all God's gifts are good (1 Tim. iv. 4; vi. 17); it is a question of making a right use of them.

*The Duties of Bishops and Priests.* These two Epistles are the fullest treatment in the New Testament of the pastoral office, its duties and the qualifications needed. For both Timothy and Titus were to ordain others (1 Tim. v. 22; Tit. i. 5), and St. Paul gives them detailed guidance as to the sort of men they are to choose. Naturally he has in view the earliest Christian practice, which was to ordain men already married. It was to be many centuries before the Church made celibacy obligatory on all her clergy, though there was always deep respect for it as a personal choice.

*The Insuppressible Sex.* The idea that St. Paul was a woman-hater is so widespread that we had better take this chance to look at it more closely. He certainly had a clear idea of women's faults—as who not a fool has not?—and he is perfectly explicit about them. All the same, his Epistles are the first glimpse we get in all history of the famous insuppressibility of women—and that alone spells revolution. For paganism had always known how to suppress women. Judaism was kinder, giving them more respect and more scope, above all opening to them a measure of spiritual life. Yet even Judaism held over them the threat of divorce. Just how paralysing this was we can guess from the surge of new energy when the threat was removed.

It is very difficult for us now to realize how absolutely revolutionary were the two things Christ did for women, the prohibition of divorce, and the opening to them of the celibate life. The one made woman free of her own

home in a totally new way; the other made her free of the life of the spirit. Taken simply at the human and natural level, this removal of a cramping fear, plus the opening of the whole spiritual world, meant a tremendous release of imprisoned energies. The picture we get in St. Paul's Epistles is of a sudden upthrust of long-pent volcanic energy—and his job was to try to guide the lava-flow so that it should fertilize, not lay waste.

There had been some preparation in Judaism for this new outburst of vitality. Jewish women were free to practise works of mercy, and to attach themselves to a great rabbi as his disciples, supporting him by their offerings. These practices passed straight into the Church, with, however, a great expansion. And if the Jews were in a measure prepared, paganism was taken completely by surprise. Women going abroad on charitable errands seemed to pagans merely indecent; while virginity, and with it the life of prayer, roused a delirium of fury and hate.

St. Paul takes for granted that his women converts are to have their full share in the works of mercy so characteristic of the early Church, and also in the life of prayer. But he was forced to take account of their pagan upbringing, a mixture of spoiling and bullying which gave no real training in self-control. Further, the Christian woman, going about on her errands of mercy, was exposed to the dangers of the streets—and in a pagan town those were very real dangers indeed. For the relations of the sexes, especially in Corinth, Asia Minor and Crete, had been vitiated beyond belief by indecent cults; it is well to remember that St. Paul's converts had to live the Christian life in the thick of "the abominations of the heathen." The women were thus exposed to temptation from two sides, from the streets, and from their own untamed passions. The wonder is that St. Paul did not

## FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY: TITUS

bundle them all back into their homes. Instead—and may the revolutionary character of his proceeding sink well into our minds—he let them run the risk, prescribing only a rigorous modesty of dress and demeanour as their best safeguard. He also realized that charitable work can become a very thin camouflage for gadding, meddling and gossip. Once again, he preferred that they should run the risk rather than be cut off from the full practice of their religion. But his outspoken remarks deal with a perfectly real danger—that charitable work, like any other good thing, may become a source of temptation, and not only in Ephesus and Crete of the first century.

It is difficult for us to realize how shocking pagans felt it that respectable women should have a recognized sphere of activity outside their homes. St. Paul was coping with one of the great forward moves of history, without precedent in human experience. The way he handled it entitles him to rank among the great liberators of women.

**THIS WEEK'S READING.** The First Epistle to Timothy, and the Epistle to Titus.

**TO THINK ABOUT.** Try to piece together what you know about Timothy and Titus. The relevant passages are:

**TIMOTHY.** 2 Tim. i. 5; Acts xvi. 1-3; 1 Thess. iii. 2; 1 Cor. xvi. 10-11; (compare 1 Tim. iv. 12); Rom. xvi. 21; Heb. xiii. 23; Phil. ii. 19-23; the whole of 1 Timothy. And you can easily find out the Epistles in which he is associated with St. Paul as a sender.

**TITUS.** We do not know when St. Paul met Titus—he is first mentioned as someone well known in Gal. ii. 1-3. And in 2 Cor. (ii. 13; vii. 6, 13, 14; viii. 6, 16, 23; xii. 18), we get the feeling that St. Paul felt him a better man for the job than Timothy, a good lad but rather young for such a tricky bit of business. There is a last allusion to him in 2 Tim. iv. 10. And of course there is the Epistle to him which we have just

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read. There is, however, an interesting possibility; he *may* be the brother of St. Luke. As we read 2 Cor. viii. 16-18, it does rather look as if "the" brother whose praise is in the Gospel (St. Luke) were meant to be the brother of the person last mentioned, namely Titus. That would explain too why St. Luke says nothing about him in Acts—he was not writing up his own family. Moreover, it is possible that though both hailed from Antioch, St. Luke had travelled (possibly for the sake of his medical studies) and St. Paul met him somewhere in Asia Minor, quite likely with a letter of introduction from Titus in Antioch, or something like that. At any rate, something is needed to explain why a man on whom St. Paul so greatly leaned is allowed to drift in without any specific notice from St. Luke.

## IV. (c) APOSTOLIC FAREWELLS: THE SHADOW OF MARTYRDOM

### *Eighteenth Week*

#### "IF WE SUFFER, WE SHALL ALSO REIGN"

2 Timothy; Jude; 2 Peter

ST. PAUL'S period of freedom lasted only a few years. In A.D. 64 there took place the great fire of Rome, which rumour attributed to the Emperor Nero himself. In an attempt to buy off popular indignation, Nero laid the blame upon the Christians, and in A.D. 65 began a persecution more cruel and sustained than any that had heretofore been met. In the course of this, both St. Peter and St. Paul suffered martyrdom, most probably in the year A.D. 67. Each of them wrote a farewell Epistle as he looked forward to the end. (2 Pet. i. 13-14; 2 Tim. iv. 6.) But whereas St. Paul's Epistle is a completely personal letter to his "dearly beloved son," Timothy, St. Peter addresses the whole Church, "them that have obtained equal faith with us in the justice of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." With these we shall read, for general convenience, the very short Epistle of St. Jude, which takes much the same line as part of 2 Peter.

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY. This Epistle shows signs of hurried writing, judging by the way St. Paul jumps from topic to topic, sometimes giving personal details about himself and others, sometimes breaking off to give counsels very similar to those in the last two Epistles we read, or to reflect upon the general state of the Church.

St. Paul's movements are impossible to trace. All we know is that he had been at Troas, where he had left

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behind some books (iv. 13), and the satchel (that is what "cloak" probably means) in which they were kept. He was anxious to get hold of these, and one purpose of all the personal details he gives seems to be to explain why he had to put Timothy on to the job. The story is apparently this: At his first examination he had been quite alone (iv. 16) and so had no one to send. Later, the band of helpers had rallied round him, but he had sent most of them off on one errand or another for the good of the Church (his own comfort coming last on the list of things to be attended to). Some of them we have met before—Titus of course; Tychicus, who carried the Epistles to the Colossians, Ephesians and Philemon; Erastus, whom we met in Acts xix. 22; while Trophimus, who went with St. Paul on his last visit to Jerusalem (Acts xx. 4; xxi. 29), has been left sick at Miletus, so is not available in Rome. (2 Tim. iv. 20.) There have been a number of defections in the band of trusted helpers—they are named in various places scattered through the Epistle—and this makes St. Paul turn more than ever to those who have stood firm. Chief of these is Timothy himself; but there is also a certain Onesiphorus (i. 16; iv. 19), who seems to have been in touch with those old and tried friends, Prisca and Aquila. Only Luke is with him (iv. 11), and apparently cannot be budged; which is why St. Paul is reduced to sending for Timothy—not too unwillingly, for he remembers his bitter grief at parting (i. 4). But St. Paul is not entirely friendless in Rome (iv. 21), though these were people he could not set to running his errands. Some have wondered whether Claudia was the wife of Pontius Pilate; but there are other possibilities. Linus is probably that Linus named in the Canon of the Mass, the first successor of St. Peter. If St. Peter was by now in prison, Linus would be very fully occupied.

The glimpses we get of the state of the Church are very

## SECOND TIMOTHY; JUDE; SECOND PETER

similar to those given in the Epistles we read last week, and St. Paul is even more emphatic about "holding the form of sound words" and "knowing of whom thou hast learned them." (2 Tim. i. 13; iii. 14.)

What gives this Epistle its hold upon us is above all the personal note all through. This hardly needs comment, especially now that we have a certain acquaintance with St. Paul. It lies on the surface and speaks straight to our hearts.

**THE EPISTLE OF ST. JUDE.** This tiny Epistle is of uncertain date. Some place it after the death of all the other Apostles, save St. John, in view of verse 17. Certainly it brings home to us the orphaned feeling of the first Christians as the Apostles disappeared from the scene, leaving the Church distracted by false teachers and harried by persecution. This consideration is not, however, decisive. It would be enough that St. Jude saw death closing in on the Apostolic band, and put together passages from the Old Testament and from Jewish tradition to hearten the Church in standing firm. Nearly his whole letter is included by St. Peter in his Second Epistle, which suggests that St. Jude's little work was the first in circulation. Both seem to have the same situation in view—the darkened scene as official government persecution threatened and at last materialized.

It is interesting to have a glimpse into the mind of St. Jude, whom we now know as the patron of hopeless cases. His heavenly career would make a longer and more exciting story than the few details we know of his earthly life. He was one of the Twelve (Luke vi. 16; John xiv. 22), and is called Thaddeus in other lists of the Apostles, possibly to avoid the name "Judas," though it has a noble ancestry. He was one of the near kinsmen of Our Lord, a brother of St. James the Less, whom he



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succeeded as Bishop of Jerusalem. He seems to have been a very retiring person, keeping in the background until, when the great Apostolic leaders were dying one by one, he comes forward with this brief word of encouragement. Christianity just then must have looked a "hopeless case" and no mistake. This retiring disposition seems to have continued in Heaven: it took a direct move on the part of Our Lord to start his cultus among the faithful, and that not till the fourteenth century, through a revelation to St. Bridget of Sweden. The last two verses of his Epistle are well worth learning by heart, for their comfort in dark moments.

**THE SECOND EPISTLE OF ST. PETER.** The note of personal reminiscence is struck in this Epistle—naturally, as St. Peter knew he was very near the end foretold for him by Our Lord. (Compare John xxi. 18, 19 and 2 Pet. i. 14.) But from that he moves on quickly to one of the high lights of his life, the Transfiguration (verses 16–18; compare Mark ix. 1–9.) These personal memories are all the more touching for their reticence; St. Peter quickly passes on to other matters. The pastor Christ had set over His flock (John xxi. 15–17) is about to resign his charge into the hands of the Prince of Pastors of whom he had spoken in his former Epistle (1 Pet. v. 4). He had himself carried out the counsels he there gives to others, and his last preoccupation is with his flock.

St. Peter well knows the perils in which he must leave that flock, beset by false teachers and false brethren, and over all the dark cloud of persecution. Yet the note of the Epistle is a sober hopefulness, not because the scene is bright—it could hardly have been darker—but because his confidence rests not on men, but on God. He need not fear bad men because he has something much better to trust to than good men: the more firm prophetic word,

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"whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts" (i. 19).

The Epistle is almost entirely concerned with things which, he knows from experience, are a source of difficulty to the faithful. Thus he has time for a last commendation of St. Paul, together with warning of the danger of wresting his words (iii. 15-16). He goes over the question of the Second Advent, in terms which become more apposite with every year that passes, though the same passing time has dimmed our sense of expectation (iii. 3-13). He gives a scathing analysis of various kinds of insincerity and the infidelity to which they lead. And he returns more than once, gently but very firmly, to the question of the Apostolic testimony and the necessity for absolute fidelity to what had been delivered to the Church by the Apostles who had known Christ (i. 8-21; iii. 2). The last two verses of the Epistle are good to have by heart, the dateless last word of the Prince of the Apostles to the Church.

**THIS WEEK'S READING.** The Second Epistle to Timothy; the Epistle of St. Jude; the Second Epistle of St. Peter.

**TO THINK ABOUT.** We have reached a great climax in Christian history, the moment at which the Church had to depend, not on men who had heard Christ and had been personally trained by Him, but on those to whom these passed on that training and commission. The Church as we know it to-day is thus taking shape before our eyes, the Church of the Apostolic succession drawing its life from the faithfully preserved Deposit of Faith. Obviously the thing to think about is this further development of the "Noli me tangere." In His last discourse Our Lord had said: "It is expedient to you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you" (John xvi. 7). We have seen this promise in action all through our reading.

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But apparently there was a tendency on the part of the Church to cling to the actual personal presence of the Apostles, as Mary Magdalen had wished to cling to Our Lord. Take a little time to think all this out a bit more. What have we gained—for since it is God's will it must be a gain—by the fact that we have to depend directly on the Church for our knowledge of Divine things? (No answer to this will be given. It would take too much space to do it justice; and it is largely a matter of reviewing already familiar truths.)

## PART FIVE

# THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

### V. THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

*Nineteenth Week*

“AMEN, COME, LORD JESUS”

*The Apocalypse*

WE now take a jump of nearly thirty years, from just before the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul in A.D. 67 to A.D. 95—years in which the Apostolic band steadily diminished in numbers, until the only member left alive was St. John at Ephesus, an old man who had outlived his generation.

What filled those thirty years was the first large-scale persecution which Christianity had to face, beginning in A.D. 65 in the reign of Nero, and not called off till the death of Domitian in A.D. 96. The probable immediate reference of the seven heads of the Beast in Apoc. xvii. 8 and 9–10 is to the Roman Emperors of the first century A.D., whose persecutions began with the attempt to destroy the newborn Saviour in Bethlehem: Augustus, Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, Nero (the five who are fallen); Vespasian, Titus (who reigned “a short time”); and Domitian, who is treated as a Nero come to life again. It was not until the persecution was near its end that any further inspired Scripture had, humanly speaking, a chance to be written. And the first book to take form of this last group finds its human inspiration in the period of persecution, indeed was composed when the Apostle John was exiled by Domitian to the island of Patmos (Apoc. i. 9). It thus had a marked topical interest for its first readers, an interest which has revived whenever at all similar trials have overtaken the Church.

*A Work of Prophecy.* Those first readers had another pull over us; they were far more familiar than we are with the Prophetical Books of the Old Testament, from which much of St. John's imagery is derived. Compare for instance the Four Living Creatures of iv. 6-8 with Isaias vi. 1-3 and Ezechiel i. 4-24. St. John indeed makes a personal use of these ancient symbols; but then, so did the ancient prophets. The first point then to seize is that the Apocalypse is a prophetical work in the traditional Jewish manner. It is also one of the finest specimens of its class, for it is what none of the others are: shapely. Its strong imaginative appeal is due in part to its artistic formfulness.

*Two Planes of Distance* Another trait in common with the ancient prophets is that it is looking all the time at two objects, one in the immediate future, another in the remote future. Some Old Testament prophecies had a partial reference to events about to occur in the lifetime of the prophet and his hearers, yet were true prophecies of the future Messias. In such a case, a Jew of the time of Christ might be familiar with the first partial fulfilment of such prophecies, yet have a certain difficulty in recognizing the second, complete fulfilment. Moreover, he could in no way forecast the complete fulfilment; he could only recognize it after it had taken place.

We are in a somewhat similar position towards the Apocalypse. We can to some extent recognize the contemporary events which St. John had in view; but the remote fulfilment will doubtless take us by surprise as much as the final fulfilment of Isaias surprised the Jews. And we cannot expect to make a complete forecast of events, any more than the Jews could. There is an excellent reason for this: it would spoil our walk with God by faith. Nothing would so completely ruin Christianity,

sucking from it its whole greatness as a religion, as to become the subject of exact calculation. The important thing is for us to recognize the work of God in our own times, especially in our own personal lives, and to respond by faith to the leading of God.

*The Great Debate.* What is of most help to us in this is not a detailed forecast of the future, whether the immediate future or the end of the world; it is some understanding of the principles which underlie the great conflicts of history. The view taken in all the prophetic works of the Bible is that God's Kingdom and Satan's kingdom are for ever at war, a chief battleground being this earth of ours. And generally speaking, any powerful empire of men is part of Satan's kingdom, using its might to try to crush God's Kingdom. In the Book of Daniel these world-empires are symbolized as a series of beasts rising out of the sea; in the Apocalypse there is one Beast (the underlying kingdom of Satan) expressing itself through a variety of states and kings, symbolized by the various heads and horns.

Naturally, the manifestation of this Beast most in St. John's mind is Imperial Rome, to which he gives the symbolic name of Babylon. (Chaps. xvii and xviii.) To his first readers these chapters must have come as a vivid account of their actual experience. But the picture suits any great oppressive power; and it is quite clear that at the end of the world there will be a final, fuller manifestation of the kingdom of the Beast, with a persecution greater than any other in history, which will be brought to an end by the Second Coming of Christ.

It is perhaps as well to lay to heart, in view of modern fashions of thought, that the Bible nowhere encourages us to expect the world to grow better and better, until there is a final triumph of good over evil *in this world*.

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Rather, it takes the line that good and evil will develop side by side until the end, both growing stronger, so that the final contest between them will be the most terrible of all. The age of greatest and most widespread holiness will thus coincide with the age when Satan makes his most determined effort to be worshipped as God (which is what he has been out for all along). That final age may be an age of great material prosperity and fully developed government, of the kind we are apt to associate with the highest degrees of civilization; its achievements may be hailed as "miracles" for their triumphant control of nature by man. And yet its main character will not lie there; it will lie in its revolt against God, a revolt on a scale without precedent in the earlier revolts which have foreshadowed it, and which we rightly regard as "apocalyptic periods."

Hence our sense of progress is not entirely misleading. The error is in thinking that all development is good development, or that it will always be well used, or that it always represents a moral gain. The Bible depicts the real moral gains of man as coming into ever fiercer conflict with his other gains—because these have been divorced from the true end of all human achievement, which is God Himself. What the Scriptures lead us to expect is that the Kingdom of Good and the Kingdom of Evil will each come to its climax simultaneously, locked in conflict to the last, a conflict so terrible that it will involve the devastation of the earth. The last chapter in the history of goodness will thus be an unprecedented period of martyrdom. Certainly the history of man, past and present, offers little encouragement to the view that the highest degree of material and political organization is favourable to goodness. In its way, it is as hostile as complete barbarism, and more deadly because it is more deceptive. The best moral achievement seems to lie in a

## THE APOCALYPSE

sort of half-way stage, when men are no longer barbarians, but when their material achievements are not yet great enough to swell their heads, blind their eyes and harden their hearts.

*Big Views.* One of the great services which the Apocalypse renders us is to lift us for a moment above the petty views and cramping horizons of our daily life. It shows us our lives, with all they hold of trivial commonplace, as yet involved in cosmic issues. We are part and parcel of great things, no less than the war of God and Satan, and it matters intensely which side we take. This redemption from insignificance is one of the very big things Christianity has to offer us; without these cosmic issues human life is apt to look a mere scurry of ants, "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Which of course the more intelligent unbelievers are finding out to-day, to judge by their novels and other writings. The "brave new world" with no God, no devil, no heaven, no hell, is a world with no meaning, a pointless existence where nothing really matters. And in this pointless world men are driven to dope themselves into insensitiveness, either by indulging their passions in private or by finding a passionate outlet in the life of the herd.

There is to-day no point at which the Christian stands out more distinctly from the neo-pagan than this—that he know his life has meaning, and he knows what that meaning is. This is in fact becoming one of the chief grouches of the neo-pagan against the Christian: How dare he behave as if his life had any meaning beyond itself? The mere suggestion—and it is a suggestion conveyed by the Christian's very demeanour—is an insult to man's claim to be absolute master in his own house. Here the Apocalypse may be a real support to us. It takes us



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to the roots of the conflict and so preserves us from frittering away our energies on side-issues.

Every one of us is as important as a solitary soldier on outpost duty, out of sight of his unit: on our watchfulness depend not only our own lives but those of all our comrades; every least little thing we do has consequences which will be felt through the whole theatre of the war, the real war of which earthly struggles are only a reflection. There is much in our own times to help us to get the "feel" of the Apocalypse; and this is good, so long as we do not involve ourselves in forced interpretations of current events. Ours is an "apocalyptic period," as periods of crisis always are. The value of the Apocalypse is to make us no longer spectators or arm-chair critics, but participators in the Great Debate, choosing God's side because it is God's. It helps us to distinguish between the *ersatz* attractions which are Satan's stock-in-trade, and the great world of the real which is always of God.

**THIS WEEK'S READING.** The Apocalypse of St. John the Apostle.

Readers are likely to fall into two classes, each benefiting by a rather different approach.

I. Those who attempt the whole book will find a useful guide in the analysis of contents given in the *Westminster Version*,<sup>1</sup> based mainly on the various sets of *sevens* which run through the book:

Prologue and Seven Epistles to Seven Churches: chaps i-iii.

The Seven Seals: iv-viii. 1.

The Seven Trumpets: viii. 2-xi.

The Seven Signs: xii-xv. 4.

The Seven Vials: xv. 5-xvi.

Destruction of Babylon: xvii-xix. 10.

The Consummation: xix. 11-xxii. 5.

Epilogue: xxii. 6-21.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. iv, p. 154.

## THE APOCALYPSE

II. Those who are pressed for time, or who find themselves bored or bewildered by the book as a whole, had better read a selection of the visions, taking them simply as the poetry of the Christian religion, the symbolic representation of realities which elude ordinary human language. There is much pasture for devotion in the following passages:

Chaps. i-iii: The Prologue and Letters to Seven Churches.

iv: The Throne of God and the Four Living Creatures.

v: The Adoration of the Lamb.

vii. 9-viii. 1: The Multitude of the Redeemed.

xii: The Woman and the Dragon. (Note. This sign refers first and foremost to the Church, ever striving to bring forth a genuinely *human* race for God. Picty sees in it an allusion to Our Lady, but this is only by way of application.)

xiv. 1-5: The Virgins.

xv. 2-4: The Sea of Glass.

xix. 5-16: The Marriage of the Lamb.

xx: Satan bound; and the General Judgment.

xxi-xxii. 5: The New Jerusalem.

xxii. 6-21: The Epilogue.

**TO THINK ABOUT.** The Apocalypse is of course an invitation to think about the Four Last Things—indeed the reading of it is a meditation on that subject. But if any have time and inclination for anything further, try this:

We have more than once departed from the order in which the books are arranged in the New Testament, but never more startlingly than in the present case. For the Apocalypse is obviously the fitting last word to Holy Scripture. What do you consider are the merits of the order sanctioned by the Church as compared with order we have followed?

**Note: THE MILLENNIUM.**

While this book was in the press, there came word that the Biblical Commission has decided that the thousand years which Satan is bound (Apoc. xx. 1-3) are to be taken in a spiritual, not a literal, sense. This ends a controversy almost as old as the Apocalypse itself.

## V. THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

### *Twentieth Week*

#### "WALK IN THE LIGHT"

##### The Three Epistles of St. John

JUST when St. John wrote his Epistles is not known, but in all probability after he had written his Gospel. As, however, they offer the easier approach to his mind and standpoint, it is better to take them first as a kind of curtain-raiser to his great drama of the Word-made-Flesh. In something the same way, the tiny Second and Third Epistles are better read before the First, in order to set the stage.

**ST. JOHN AT EPHESUS.** The Church at Ephesus was doubly privileged. It was founded by St. Paul; and after his death it was the chosen seat of St. John, the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (John xx. 2). Accordingly we find him in the Apocalypse exercising supervision over the Churches of the surrounding region. (Apoc. i-iii.)

It cannot therefore surprise us that the conditions prevailing when St. Paul wrote to the same region—to Colossae, Laodicea and Ephesus—should be apparently the conditions still prevailing when St. John took up his abode there. What we gathered of the heresies St. Paul was combating is still of use in understanding St. John's object in writing thirty or forty years later. The chief difference is that the false doctrines have grown more definite, the false teachers bolder and the sects more strongly organized. And the defections among Christians have become sadly more numerous.

The main tendency is still to deny that Jesus is the

incarnation of the real God, because God could not be associated with a material body. He might, however, be an incarnation of one of those lesser beings, intermediate between God and man, whom these heretics imagined as managing the affairs of a world too base for God's personal attention. The real God was too high, too exalted and pure, to come into contact with mundane things, especially with matter. Notions of this sort gave rise to numberless theories, such as that "Jesus" was a man taken possession of by some kind of superior being called "Christ," and therefore the Nazarene was neither really God nor really man. Or else He was thought of as a man so completely possessed by a divine being—divine in the vague pagan sense—that His human nature was quite washed out and did not count. The mystics of the ancient world had no difficulty in seeing that Our Lord is in some way superhuman, whether a kind of demigod or an emanation of the real God who had borrowed a man's body quite temporarily for his use. What they found difficult to admit was that He had a real human nature—it seemed to them irreverent to think that God could unite Himself in that intimate fashion to something so contemptible as humanity. It is against this class of ideas that St. John develops his great doctrine of the Person of Our Lord, perfect God and perfect Man, the Word made Flesh.

This expression, the Word, in Greek *logos*, seems to have come into use through the contact of Jewish and Greek thought, especially in Alexandria. The *Logos* had affinities with what the Old Testament writers call the *Wisdom* of God. In each case there seems to be a sense that what we may call the Mind of God, without being separate from God, yet has a sphere of activity of its own. And this idea helped to bridge over the gap between the strict monotheism of the Jews and the full

Christian doctrine of the Trinity. For the best thought of the ancient world before Christ had thus dimly seen that in God there is something, a Mind, Wisdom, Word, which is in a way capable of independent action. It was this Word, says St. John, which became Flesh. It is really God, yet has a distinct identity of Its own, an identity made known to His chosen witnesses by actual sight and touch. (1 John i. 1-3.) What St. John opposes to the speculations of the sects is the hard fact of *evidence*. The witnesses, he insists, the people who actually saw and knew Jesus, knew that He was really man, and also recognized in Him God, the real God, the ultimate principle of all life and being. Anything else is guess-work. This is fact.

THE SECOND EPISTLE is a very short note to an unnamed lady—for *Electa* is not a proper name; the better rendering would be “to the elect lady.” Short as it is, however, we find in it the four strong notes of St. John’s teaching. They are:

(a) The truth about Christ is known by the testimony of those who personally knew Him, and who have unwaveringly told the same story from the beginning.

(e) In this doctrine we must *abide*, for so only can we have the new life of union with God, Father and Son, which like the doctrine is God’s gift.

(c) The sign that we have this new life (and so are faithful to the true doctrine), is that we become able to love one another. This power of love is the great practical mark whereby we distinguish the false from the true. Compare Our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount. (Matt. v. 38-48.) The heathen, and even bad men like publicans, have natural affection for their kindred and benefactors. Christians are to have a supernatural affection, which goes out to those who harm them and work them

ill—and of course to the naturally uncongenial, as the Little Flower so clearly recognized. This power to love those whom naturally we should care little or nothing about—it is this which marks off Christian *caritas* from the natural affection we find in all decent human beings. St. John is very emphatic that this power to love against nature is the one clear sign that we have received a life above nature.

(d) We must be on our guard against the numerous deceivers who try to lure us away from the true doctrine, and so lure us away from union with God and the God-given power of love. St. John is most emphatic that Christians are to have no fellowship with those who have broken with the new life and the new love, since they have broken with the true doctrine.

THE THIRD EPISTLE is a similar short note to a man named Gaius, to recommend someone called Demetrius who has stood firm in the Faith, and to warn against a certain Diotrophes who has fallen away from the truth. The name Gaius (also spelled Caius) appears several times in the course of St. Paul's adventures (Acts xix. 29; xx. 4; Rom. xvi. 23; 1 Cor. i. 14); but it was such a common name that we cannot jump to identifications. St. John's note is purposely short because he soon hopes to see Gaius. One reason for sending Demetrius to him is that Gaius was an extremely hospitable person, and this *may* be a link with the Gaius from whose house St. Paul wrote to the Romans. There is little doctrine in this Epistle, but it is pervaded by a strong sense of the importance of true doctrine, since St. John goes to the trouble of sending a reliable teacher with this personal certificate of his fidelity.

THE FIRST EPISTLE. This lovable work is a mixture of letter and dissertation, not very orderly in its arrange-

ment—which endears it to those numerous people who are more like butterflies than bees in their search for spiritual honey. Discursiveness is a real help to some, who grow confused by a too systematic treatment of great truths; it is a comfort to find their needs thus catered for by an Apostle, no less a person than the Beloved Disciple himself. Yet in spite of this discursive treatment, flitting from point to point and back again, this Epistle gives us a massive sense of moving in the solid world of true doctrine; its flowers grow in the ground, they are not flowers in vases destined soon to wither. Its soil all through is the great doctrine of the Fourth Gospel: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth" (John i. 14).

Some of the more puzzling expressions are probably answers to opinions current at the time but long since forgotten, at least in that precise form. For instance, the passage about sin and forgiveness (i. 8-10, and other glancing references) is probably aimed at heretics who claimed that their spiritual development had reached a point where they became so identified with God as to be unable to sin. This theory is found among Hindu mystics, and tends to spring up wherever mysticism has broken with Christian truth; the actual result is apt to be that such mystics fall into more shocking sins than the common run of men whom they despise. By contrast, the Church has always echoed that great mystic St. Paul; there never comes a point, in this world, where a man cannot fall away from God. Even St. Paul rightly feared "lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway" (1 Cor. ix. 27).

The greater part of such strange expressions concern the truth about the Person of Our Lord. It would not

occur to anyone to-day to deny that "Jesus is the Christ," for "Christ" has come to be treated as a sort of surname. We get a helpful clue in the work of St. Irenaeus, who died in A.D. 202. He had been a pupil of St. Polycarp who in his turn had been a pupil of St. John, and when he was Bishop of Lyons he wrote what proved to be the decisive book against the Gnostic heresies. It is this Gnostic way of thinking which we find both St. Paul and St. John combating in Asia Minor. Now, St. Irenaeus tells us of a Gnostic sect that distinguished between the human man Jesus, and a heavenly semi-divine being whom they called "Christ." This "Christ" they said, descended upon Jesus at His baptism and took possession of Him, abandoning Him again on the Cross (hence the cry, "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"). Such a doctrine is obviously a denial of the unity of His Person. To know of it sheds light for us on the type of false teaching which St. John had in mind.

But though all this now seems very remote, in this particular form, a similar idea is not really very far from some minds to-day, though more often in the opposite sense. The human man Jesus is thought of as having somehow taken possession of God in a way anyone might, though in fact no one else actually has. The modern tendency is the opposite of the ancient; the ancient world "dissolved Jesus" (iv. 8) because it saw Him as too divine to be man; the modern world "dissolves" Him because He looks to it too human to be Divine. In either case, St. John's doctrine is the one we need: "Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God." For in either case the important thing is that there is just the one Person, "that which was from the beginning . . . the life eternal, which was with the Father, and hath appeared to us" (i. 1-2). "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in



**"WALK IN THE LIGHT"**

him, and he in God" (iv. 15). The spirit that denies these truths St. John bluntly calls Antichrist.

But the thing that gives this Epistle its captivating glow, which holds and warms our hearts, is its doctrine of love.

**THIS WEEK'S READING.** The three Epistles of St. John, taking the Second and Third as preparation to the First.

**TO THINK ABOUT.** Try to set in order all you know of St. John's life and character, apart from his Gospel, which we shall read next week. No answer will be given to this question, but the relevant passages are these:

All four lists of the Apostles mention him with his brother James (Matt. x. 3; Mark iii. 17; Luke vi. 14; Acts i. 13).

His call is related in Matt. iv. 21; Mark i. 19.

He was present with Peter and James at the Transfiguration (Matt. xvii. 1-13; Mark ix. 1-12; Luke ix. 28-36); at the raising of Jairus's daughter (Mark v. 37; Luke viii. 51); and at Gethsemani (Matt. xxvi. 37; Mark xiv. 33).

He and Peter were sent to prepare the Last Supper (Luke xxii. 8).

His mother tried to beg special favours for him and his brother James (Matt. xx. 20-8; Mark x. 35-45).

In Acts he takes a leading part in close association with Peter (iii. 1, 11; iv. 13; viii. 14), after which he drops out of the story until we hear of the martyrdom of his brother James (xii. 2).

He appears for a moment in Galatians (ii. 9). After that there is silence until the various mentions of his name in the Apocalypse (i. 1, 4, 9; xxi. 2-xxii. 8), and then his Epistles.

Your memory will doubtless supply some further information. Think over this fact a little, and realize how much waits to be filled in when we come to his Gospel next week.

## V. THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

### *Twenty-first Week*

#### "WE SAW HIS GLORY"

##### St. John's Gospel

THE little study we have been making this week past, of what the New Testament tells us of St. John apart from his Gospel, has prepared us for the first thing we need to realize about that Gospel: that St. John was writing to fill in gaps in the other three. By the time he took up his pen, the rest of the New Testament had all been in circulation for nearly thirty years, the older parts for over fifty. St. John wrote for readers who were at home in the works of the other Apostles. And in his Gospel he clearly expects his readers to have the other three Evangelists pretty well by heart.

There is a second thing to realize: St. John's Gospel is the work of a very old man. When he wrote, possibly as late as A.D. 100, he was looking back over seventy years to the days when he followed Jesus up and down Palestine. And his story has the characteristics of an old man's memories: photographic accuracy as he recalls the scenes of his youth; and a tendency to interrupt the story with comments upon it. By the time he came to write, St. John had had a long lifetime in which to reflect upon these unforgettable three years of his early manhood. For seventy years he had been meditating on the meaning of Our Lord's life, work and Person, seeing ever more and more than he had fully taken in at the first contact with God come in the flesh; and this meditation is interwoven with his story. Hence the double character of his Gospel, a unique blend of lofty thought with sharply

defined accuracy in detail when he relates the facts which gave rise to the meditation.

St. John, then, wrote primarily to tell what the other Evangelists had left out. Even so, he assures us in his very last sentence, the tale is incomplete (xxi. 25). As we saw earlier, the Apostles before they left Jerusalem came to an agreement as to which incidents in the life of Our Lord they were all to put forward; and this selection is what we get in the work of the Synoptists. Various reasons, some of which we shall consider presently, made it wise to hold certain details in reserve. But in A.D. 100 those reasons no longer operated; indeed they had not mattered greatly since the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70; St. John was thus at liberty to fill in the omissions.

*Filling in Gaps.* Consequently, St. John's Gospel consists in high proportion of matter "peculiar" to himself. He seldom relates what others have told, and when he does it is with a definite end in view. One such definite end is that an incident related even by all three earlier Evangelists, such as the Feeding of the Five Thousand (Matt. xiv. 13-21; Mark vi. 32-44; Luke ix. 10-17) may be necessary to his main purpose. At first sight, this looks like the very story he would omit; he includes it in order to lead up to the great Eucharistic Discourse in the latter part of the same chapter (vi). The climax there is the critical test which some of Our Lord's professed followers failed to pass. Even after seeing His creative power at work in the multiplication of the loaves, they could not believe Him when He said, "The Bread that I will give is My Flesh, for the life of the world" (vi. 52).

Another thing St. John is at pains to do is to give the reasons, the connecting link, for things told by the other Evangelists. An important instance occurs after this

very miracle of the Multiplication of the Loaves. All the other Evangelists tell us that Our Lord forced the Twelve to leave in a boat, while He retired to the hills. Only St. John tells us why—the people wished to make Him king (vi. 14–15). In the same way, the other Evangelists relate the call of the first disciples as if Our Lord had picked a set of total strangers at first sight in Galilee. St. John tells us how they had met Him before, when they were disciples of John the Baptist before the Baptism of Jesus. Incidentally, this explains why the Apostles were so distressed at the death of the Baptist, as is mentioned in the other Gospels just before the miracle of the loaves, so distressed that Our Lord tried to get them a little quiet in which to recover. (Matt. xiv. 10–18 and parallel passages.) A further instance is that St. John explains how St. Peter came to be present in the courtyard of the High Priest's house. For some reason the "other disciple" had the right of entry there—and in fact St. John shows himself rather well up in what was going on among highly placed Jewish leaders. Possibly he tells the story of Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin (the Great Council of the Jews) partly in order to indicate where he got his information about what that Council was thinking and doing.

*The Order of Events.* Another reason for repeating what others had told is this: there are indications that St. John was not perfectly satisfied with the order of events in the other Gospels. Indeed, there is a tradition to this effect, recorded by that same Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis in the second century, whom we mentioned before as quoted by the historian Eusebius.<sup>1</sup> This tradition refers explicitly to St. John's view of St. Mark's Gospel, but as St. Matthew and St. Luke preserve the same general

<sup>1</sup> See note on p. 67.

## "WE SAW HIS GLORY"

order the remark applies to all three: "This also the Elder (i.e. St. John the Apostle) used to say: 'Mark, having been Peter's interpreter, wrote accurately all that he remembered, though he did not (record) in order the things said or done by Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor followed Him: but subsequently, as I have said, (attached himself to) Peter who used to frame his teaching so as to meet the wants of his hearers, and not as making a connected narrative of the Lord's discourses. Thus Mark committed no error, for he wrote down some particulars just as he called them to mind; he took heed to one point only—to omit none of the facts that he had heard, and to state nothing falsely in (his narrative of) them.'"<sup>1</sup>

St. John then endorses St. Mark's story, save to a minor degree as regards the order of events. When therefore he puts an incident at a different point from the Synoptists, we may take it that he is quietly correcting a mistaken impression. The most striking instance is the cleansing of the Temple, which St. John puts early in the Ministry (ii. 13-22) while St. Matthew and St. Mark place it at the close. (Matt. xxi. 12-18; Mark xi. 15-18.) Neither St. Matthew nor St. Mark, it will be remembered, claims to tell everything that happened in strict order; only St. Luke acknowledges such an aim; and St. Matthew, as we saw, groups Our Lord's teaching by idea rather than strictly by time.

This joins up with another big example of St. John's work in filling in gaps: he lays a much larger part of his narrative in Jerusalem. The other Evangelists relate only one journey to Jerusalem, the last, when Our Lord went up for the Pasch before which He was crucified. Just why they did this we shall see in a moment. But

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from *The Catholic Student's "Aids" to the Bible*, by Fr. Hugh Pope, O.P., vol. ii, "The Gospels", p. 200.

obviously, this was for them the only point where they could suitably bring in the cleansing of the Temple, which was bound to happen in Jerusalem, since the Jews had no other Temple in all the world. St. John, by contrast, relates several other journeys, spread over the whole three years of the Ministry, when Our Lord went to Jerusalem on the occasion of other great Feasts of the Jews—the Feast of Tabernacles is mentioned (vii. 2) and the Feast of the Dedication (x. 22). It was thus easy for him to fit in the story of the Cleansing at the point where it belonged.

There are two probable reasons for this full treatment of the Jerusalem visits. One is that the other Evangelists had dealt very fully with Our Lord's doings in Galilee, while St. Luke had rounded this out with an account of His tour in Peraea, the district beyond Jordan. There was no need to repeat what they had said: it was familiar to all the Church. The other is that the people concerned in the Jerusalem stories were still alive during the early preaching of the Gospel, and to say too much about them might have laid them open to "reprisals" on the part of the Jewish authorities. We have plenty of evidence that it was dangerous to be a Christian in Jerusalem! Regard for their safety might well determine the Apostles to give as little publicity as possible to what Our Lord had done in Jerusalem, save at the time of His Crucifixion, which could not be omitted in any narrative. But after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70, this consideration no longer applied. Indeed, it is possible that St. John wrote his Gospel as early as A.D. 80. We have no certain evidence, and the only thing that could have prevented it was the harassed state of the Church during the first great persecution. Any time after A.D. 70, St. John was at liberty to make these stories public without risk to those concerned.

*New Material.* Most of St. John's material then is new. He gives us not one single parable of Our Lord's, and a completely new set of miracles (save for the Multiplication of the Loaves). Some of these miracles are so astounding—the cure of the man born blind, for instance, or the man that had been helpless for thirty-eight years, or above all the raising of Lazarus—that at first sight one wonders how they came to be left out by the other Evangelists. But in each case the narrative gives us a clue; the people concerned stood in danger from the Jewish authorities (v. 10-16; ix. 14-38; xii. 10). It looks as if it were judged best to keep quiet about these, and others, until death removed them from the risk of human vengeance.

In something the same way, the miracle of Cana of Galilee (ii. 1-11) may have been passed over in silence as one of those intimate details about Our Lady not made public till after her death, and left by St. Luke to the man who had the best right to narrate them. It is entirely to St. John that we owe our picture of Mary at the Foot of the Cross.<sup>1</sup>

*The Discourses.* Once we grasp these principles, we no longer feel surprised at St. John's omissions, even when they go the length of leaving out the institution of the Eucharist. After all, that had been recorded four times, by St. Paul as well as the other three Evangelists. St. John therefore gives us the Washing of the Feet (xiii. 2-17); the great Eucharistic Discourse pronounced at Capernaum after the Multiplication of the Loaves (vi. 24-70); and the intimate discourse to the Disciples at the Last Supper after Judas had gone out (chaps. xiv-xvii). Other outstanding discourses are Our Lord's words to

<sup>1</sup> Much the easiest way to grasp all this is to use a good Harmony of the Gospels, such as that by Mgr. Barton given in the List of Books in Appendix B.

## ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL

Nicodemus (iii. 1-21); to the woman of Samaria (iv. 1-30); and the beautiful discourse on the Good Shepherd (x. 1-18).

Our Lord's way of talking in these discourses is so unlike the pithy, picturesque style we find in the other Evangelists that people are sometimes puzzled by the difference. A few considerations may therefore help. First, in Matt. xi. 25-30 we find St. Matthew reporting a short discourse in exactly the style we find in St. John; this tells us that Our Lord had a second way of talking besides the epigrammatic way the other Evangelists record. Secondly, it looks as though the Apostles, faced with making a choice among Our Lord's sayings, first put forward those that were least difficult to understand, namely, those in His pithy, popular style.

In the third place, there were two good reasons for not over-emphasizing those sayings in which Our Lord specifically claimed to be God: (a) such claims made Jews "go off the deep end" so that they would not even discuss Our Lord's claim to be a messenger from God; and (b) pagans had such crude or hazy notions of God that to give them these sayings at the start might have suggested the idea of a demigod like Hercules or some other hero of the old myths.~In both cases, the time to set forth Our Lord's claims more explicitly was after some progress in the Faith had been made. When there had come into being a considerable body of Christians who had true ideas of God, it became less dangerous to publish the full range of what Christ had said about Himself. In fact, as we saw last week and earlier, there were beginning to be misinterpretations of His nature, mission and Person, and this made it desirable to complete the record of what He Himself had claimed on the subject.

Fourthly, it is better for people to see something for themselves than to be told it before they are ready to



## "WE SAW HIS GLORY"

take it in. The Jesus of the earlier Evangelists is easily recognized as God by honest hearts. Once that recognition is made is the time to say, "Well, He said so Himself."<sup>1</sup> And in point of fact, people incapable of recognizing the Divinity in the pages of, say, St. Mark, are not helped but hindered by the unveiled claims recorded by St. John. As St. John records, Our Lord once said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed" (xx. 29). The spirit that demands marvels as the price of belief is the spirit that cannot believe marvels, because it baulks at evidence of the ordinary kind.

In St. John then we have a firsthand witness to words and deeds of Our Lord in the main unrecorded by the other Evangelists. He had been meditating on those words and deeds through a long life, and in the great conception of the Word made Flesh he had found a way of expressing the truth which he had seen and heard. When he came to write he gave us faithfully the substance of what Our Lord had said, with enough of comment to bring out its deeper meaning. His own reflections are often given in the form of an "aside." In the main, however, he simply chooses those incidents which illustrate the theme set out in the opening verses of his Gospel. As a Catholic scholar has put it: "The Apostle, in view of the aim he has set himself, chooses the words of Jesus, developes them, interprets them, and at the threshold of his Gospel, gives us in the prologue the key of the mystery."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Notice, however, that Our Lord never calls Himself "the Word." It is St. John who gives us this profound interpretation of His Person. As for Our Lord, even His most open claims (e.g. John viii. 58) had something indirect about them so that His hearers had to use their wits to see what He meant. Their very quick response on this occasion (see next verse) shows that there was no doubt in any mind as to His meaning.

<sup>2</sup> Lebreton, *Les Origines du Dogme de la Trinité*, 4th ed., pp. 439 ff. Quoted from the *Westminster Version*, vol. ii, p. xxxix-xl.

## ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL

St. John has in fact anticipated any difficulty we may feel by what he tells us of the Paraclete. Neither St. John nor any other Apostle commissioned by Christ was left to his own human wisdom or the natural fidelity of his memory. In all that concerned his commission to teach in Christ's name, an Apostle could rely not on himself but on the Holy Ghost. It looks as if St. John were gently reminding his readers of this very fact when he reports Our Lord's promises: "The Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you" (xiv. 26). And again: "I have yet many things to say to you; but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth. For He shall not speak of Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, He shall speak, and the things that are to come, He shall show you. He shall glorify me; because He shall receive of mine, and shall show it to you" (xvi. 12-14). It is God, not man, who guarantees to us the truth of the testimony borne by Christ's chosen witnesses (xxi. 24).

*The Theology.* But it is the theology which gives St. John's Gospel its primary character—and the scope of that theology is outlined for us in the first eighteen verses (fourteen of which are familiar to us as the Last Gospel at Mass). In the other Gospels we meet a Man whom men slowly recognize as God; and when they penetrate the secret they are bidden keep it dark. In the Fourth Gospel we have God walking among men almost without disguise—save the obvious fact of His humanity. He declares openly who He is and makes the most stupendous claims, no matter how much people are "put off" by them or driven into violent hostility.

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After our reading of St. John's Epistles, and those of St. Paul to Ephesus and Colossae, we can better appreciate the situation which St. John had to meet. Given the ideas current among the mystical sects of the ancient world, St. John's expressed intention gains a new sharpness of meaning: "These are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." . . . His Gospel does not sound like controversy, for it is that noblest of all forms of controversy, positive exposition of the truth. That truth rests, not upon guesswork, but upon evidence; the Christian answer to speculation is always to appeal to the evidence of the first witnesses and to the facts they attest. These, St. John seems to say, are the facts and thus alone can they be interpreted: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we saw His glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

### ***THIS WEEK'S READING.*** St. John's Gospel.

Bear in mind that the "other disciple" mentioned at various points is St. John himself. A good set of divisions is based upon the three years of Christ's ministry:

**First Year:** The Prologue (i. 1-18). Chaps. i-vi. Note that Our Lord was twice in Jerusalem during this period (chaps. ii and v), but that the section closes with the great Eucharistic Discourse at Capharnaum in Galilee.

**Second Year:** Chaps. vii-xii. Entirely in Jerusalem. That is to say, St. John relates only the incidents that befell in Jerusalem.

**The Third Year:** The Passion Narrative.

Chaps. xiii-xvii. The Last Supper.

Chaps. xviii-xxi. The Death and Resurrection.

**TO THINK ABOUT.** You may prefer to have no definite assignment this week, but simply to give yourself up to the narrative. If, however, you feel the want of anything further, try one of these—neither will have an answer worked out at the end of the book.

## ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL

(a) Fill in the outline sketch you made last week with the further material this Gospel gives about St. John, then make an appraisal of his character.

(b) Trace out the means by which Our Lord made Himself known for what He was, thus illustrating the theme of the Prologue. This refers not only to His words but His acts; but make a special list of His words, noting to whom they were addressed.

## EPILOGUE: WHAT NEXT?

### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

HAVING read the New Testament through once, what do we do next? for if we have really enjoyed it, we shall surely wish to do something.

And yet, perhaps not immediately. For the first counsel to offer is: if you are feeling tired of the New Testament, be sure to knock off. After all, if you have followed this course at all steadily, you have had a fairly strenuous six months, taking in new ideas all the time. There is nothing whatsoever to be ashamed of in feeling the need of a breather. After a rest, zest will return.

If, however, you wish to go straight on, another suggestion can be confidently made: Go more thoroughly through the Gospels. The worst weakness of the present book is that it has been impossible to do anything like justice to the Gospels. Still, it is hoped that what you have learned here will prove a useful springboard for your next dive. For further study of the Gospels, a good harmony may be your best next move. You will find details of Harmonies, as well as of other helpful works, in the LIST OF BOOKS given in Appendix B.

*The Catholic Biblical Association.* If you really want to make progress in Bible studies, by far the best thing to do would be to join the Catholic Biblical Association. The subscription is only 2s. 6d. a year, for the Association is most anxious to help the people who cannot bring much time or much learning to the study of the Sacred Scriptures. Indeed, at present the Association is chiefly finding out what sort of help people feel they most need. It has begun, however, by issuing a small bulletin, com-

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

piling a bibliography (a list of Catholic books on the Bible available in English), and starting the nucleus of a library. All these services depend for their development upon support; so that you help others as well as yourself by taking a share in that support. Plans are being drawn up for individual and group studies; and suggestions—e.g. for an edition of the Bible printed like a modern book, instead of treating each verse like a new paragraph—are being collected for action when conditions permit. If you have difficulty in getting hold of books, it would be worth your while to join for the sake of the library alone. It is not yet a big one, but it will grow just about as fast as an increased membership permits. At any rate, if you want to help on the cause of Bible studies, this is the wheel to which your shoulder should be put.

Write for information, with stamps for a reply, to the Secretary of the Catholic Biblical Association, Fr. R. Fuller, St. Edmund's College, Old Hall, Ware, Herts.

*Some General Counsels.* For further studies in general, the important counsel is: Do what you feel like doing. No one but yourself can tell you that in detail. In the main, though, one finds that people's interests fall roughly into three classes, according as they are more drawn by dogma, by history, or by the devotional use of the Scriptures. Whichever interest is uppermost in your mind, follow that. It is the one which will do you most good. In this mass-produced age, it is a great source of personal freedom to do what one *wants* to do instead of sliding down some ready-made rut. Few people nowadays are doing what they like nearly as much as is good for them; far too often they are reduced to doing what puts money into someone else's pocket, whether it gives them genuine personal pleasure or not. One of the most important ways of putting up a fight for freedom is to develop your own *real*

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

interests, in such leisure time as you have. For that also develops your initiative and independence, and so makes you more fully *you* than you were before. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. iii. 17). God, who did not mass-produce you, likes to see you being yourself. The pursuit of a spontaneous interest of your own is thus an act of worship to Him.

At the same time, remember that dogma, history and devotion are not watertight compartments. Each is necessary to the others as soil, sun and rain are needed to make a garden. Thus both theology and history are apt to become dry-as-dust unless well watered by devotion, while devotion without dogma becomes a sentimental bog. And nothing really nourishing grows in bogs. Similarly history, unless one grasps its interconnection with dogma, may lead us very far from the truth about the religion which Christ founded. Whichever then is your main interest, see that the other two get their innings, above all see that devotion and dogma are never allowed to fall entirely out of sight. For this purpose, you will find the Liturgy for great Feasts an amazingly rich pasture, for the Church's use of dogma for devotion is there seen at its highest pitch of genius.

There is another turn which your spontaneous interest may take. Instead of wishing to know more about the New Testament, you may wish to know what happened next. Having seen the Church in its baby phase—and what an alive baby it is!—you may want to follow its life down the ages. That too is an excellent thing to do. Only, as you go, you will constantly find that you need to go back and work more at the New Testament, simply because all later ages appeal to it. It is impossible, for instance, to appreciate the Church's great stands against heresy unless we enter with some fullness into the meaning and spirit of Holy Scripture.

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Even those who do not feel drawn in this way will gain by "dipping" into some other early Christian writers, say the Epistles of St. Ignatius and St. Polycarp, the work of Justin Martyr, and a curious allegorical work called *The Pastor of Hermas*. For this gives us a standard of judgment. To compare inspired with uninspired writings is to gain a new respect for the Holy Ghost as author. Whatever the difficulties of the New Testament they are nothing to the difficulties of the Christian literature, very little later in date, whose authors had no help beyond what God gives to any man honestly pursuing his calling. Yet in height, depth, breadth, the Scriptures have it every time. It is the profounder work which is also the most universal in appeal, for it is the more human as well as the more Divine. After nearly two thousand years, the New Testament remains an eminently readable book; its universality is an unfailing source of modernity, so that for us as for every age it is a book about ourselves. This cannot be said of the uninspired literature of the early Church. It is a good thing to bring this home to our imaginations by a little (quite a little) experiment.

Yet another spontaneous impulse might be to go back behind the New Testament and learn more of how God prepared the world for the coming of Christ. Here the single biggest item is of course the Old Testament. But the poets, philosophers and lawgivers of the ancient world also have a place, and so has the strange tangle of ancient pagan religion, with its pathetically garbled foreshadowings of the truth. All over the world there seems to have been a dim, groping idea that help would come from a god whose death and resurrection would win new life for man, and whose mother would be Mother of both gods and men. The whole spiritual quest of man before Christ can be related to Him who came "not to



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destroy but to fulfil," a *preparatio evangelica* which helped to make ready the way of the Lord.

Starting thus from the New Testament, we find lines of interest radiating out in all directions, so that we may hardly know which road looks the most inviting. But there is one counsel which can be offered to all, whatever path beckons them most insistently. *There is nothing, absolutely nothing, which takes the place of personal familiarity with the sacred text.* Whatever you do, do this—work some part at least of Holy Writ into the very texture of your mind and heart. Systematic meditation is by far the best way to secure this; to possess even one Gospel and one Epistle in this fashion is, in a very profound sense, to be more at home in the Scriptures than if we had a shallower but broader acquaintance with its whole range.

Learning by heart is unfashionable nowadays, and we no longer get the drilling in childhood which made memorizing a natural habit. But we need not surrender tamely to the spirit of the age. Especially those who are young enough to acquire a new habit will lay up a priceless treasure for their whole lifetime if they try to commit to memory passages from the New Testament—fancy being able to cheer your heart in a queue by running over St. Paul's great poem on charity! Of course only attempt to get by heart what really appeals to yourself—it makes learning unbelievably easier. Such texts stored up are a reservoir of hope and encouragement, and a great support in temptation.

So if you cannot get any of the books listed below, do not let that worry you. Turn to your New Testament and work some well-loved part of it into the very texture of your being. The intellectual study of the Scriptures is a very big thing, and it is earnestly hoped that you will see your way to carry on with it. But it is the heart

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which has the last word, as well as the first. "Life issueth out of the heart," and the experience of God's servants down the ages is that a loving familiarity with God's very words is one of the best helps towards "keeping thy heart with all watchfulness" (Prov. iv. 28). This is one of the ways of entering deep into the Communion of Saints, for many of those now in glory cheered themselves on their pilgrimage by this very means. Millions of souls now in bliss have made their own the words of the Psalmist which shall be our closing prayer, a link with the "great cloud of witnesses over our head" (Heb. xii. 1) whom St. Paul invokes to cheer us to run our race as they ran theirs:

Open Thou mine eyes: and I will consider the wondrous things of Thy law.

Set before me for a law the way of Thy justifications, O Lord: and I will always seek after it.

Give me understanding, and I will search Thy law; and I will keep it with my whole heart.

Lead me into the path of Thy commandments; for this same have I desired.

I have run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst enlarge my heart.

(Psalm cxviii. 18, 33-5, 32.)

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### ANSWERS

#### To the Suggestions *To Think About*

**FIRST WEEK:** There are three chief reasons why you are advised to begin with the Book of Acts:

1. It is the beginning of *our own story*. The Book of Acts is still going on: St. Luke only wrote the first instalment—notice how abruptly he breaks off. *We* are living a later instalment of the same story.

2. The Church is older than the New Testament. What we read about in Acts is the life of the Church before the New Testament was written. It is important to get this firmly fixed in our minds. St. Luke was probably writing during the second year of St. Paul's imprisonment in Rome (A.D. 61–2 is a likely date). At that time, all that existed of the New Testament was a few Epistles of St. Paul in Greek; St. Matthew's Gospel in Aramaic (the language of the Palestinian Jews), not yet put into Greek and so not yet available for the world at large; St. Mark's Gospel in Greek, probably finished only a short time before, so not in very wide circulation; and St. Luke's own Gospel, which he had been working on the year before. Even though written, these books had not been widely read. Those lucky enough to have heard one Epistle, or read one Gospel, were still a minority. The Church at large was still living on "the Apostolic word," the testimony of the Apostles given by word of mouth. What set people wanting written Gospels was just that the Apostles were growing old, in increasing danger of death at the hands of their persecutors. Naturally then a demand arose for a record of Christ's life before the witnesses were all dead. St. Luke tells us that "many" had "taken in hand to set forth a narration" (Luke i. 1). This may mean that notes were taken of what the Apostles related, and these might in course of time swell to a considerable narrative. In Acts we read of

the time *before* people in general had wakened up to the need for written Gospels. They still depended wholly on the Apostolic "word."

8. Only when we have entered into the story in Acts can we get the hang of St. Paul's Epistles.

**SECOND WEEK.** The two worrying problems which beset the minds of the first Christians were:

1. If a pagan becomes a Christian must he first become a Jew? If he wishes baptism, must he first receive circumcision (the rite by which males became members of the Jewish Church)? Before keeping the Sermon on the Mount, must he first keep the Law of Sinai? In short, how does the new revelation in Christ stand to the old revelation through Moses? There must be a connection, since Christians appeal to the Hebrew Prophets to prove that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah promised to the Jews. . . . This is the main subject of the Book of Acts, and the one of the two problems you have the best chance to spot. It is of such importance that we shall find it cropping up again and again.

2. The other worrying problem is the Second Advent. The first Christians lived in the expectation of Our Lord's return; it was something that might happen any day. (It still is, of course, but we have lost that keen feeling of expectation about it.) One reason that makes this difficult to spot at this stage is that, when St. Paul wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians, the element of worry had not yet arisen. The Second Advent was simply a great and glorious hope, waiting just round the corner.

But as the years passed, and still Our Lord did not come, the very keenness of their hope did give rise to a worry. Indeed, the pagans began to taunt the Christians about the non-fulfilment of their hope. We find St. Peter, about fifteen years later than the Epistles to the Thessalonians, taking the matter up. (2 Pet. iii. 3-18.) A good many passages of the New Testament become much clearer if we realize that they refer to this worry.

It was rather a complex question. For instance, one item

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in it was: "What will happen to the just who are alive when Our Lord returns? Will they have to die?" Several times in the New Testament we find Apostles explaining that this is not the case; the just who are alive when Christ comes will be transformed without having to undergo bodily death. We have read one such explanation (1 Thess. iv. 12-17), and there are others.

Another item of difficulty was that some people had gone off with the idea that Our Lord had promised to come back before the Apostles died, so that the death of an Apostle gave their faith a jolt. When at last only one Apostle was left alive, St. John, such people said to themselves, "Surely Our Lord *must* return before John dies!" Therefore, after he had finished his Gospel, St. John took pen in hand once more and added another chapter, which reads like an answer made to remarks on the rest. If you look, you will see that the last verse of his chapter xx was originally meant to be the end of the whole Gospel of St. John. Chapter xxi seems to have been added to clear up confusions. Verses 20-3 deal with just this notion that Our Lord had promised to return before St. John himself died.

**THIRD WEEK.** What the New Testament has to say about the Second Advent is valuable for social reformers because it helps to keep them Christian. Certainly God does not wish us to make the earth a sort of imitation hell, like our industrial cities. But neither does He intend to give us our Heaven on earth. Earth, in God's plan for us, is to be a school, and a fairly hard school, training us for our true life in Heaven. Undue hardship is of course no training, for it crushes and twists us. Capitalist industrialism thus fails by this test, simply because imitation hell on earth is *not* good training for Heaven. The chief duty of any social order is first and foremost to fit men for Heaven.

Our present order—or disorder—is thus failing in its main purpose. But because we feel this so strongly we are in danger from the opposite direction; we are tempted to fall for New Orders that promise us Heaven on earth. If we let our-

selves get taken in like that, we too shall be deserting God's plan and adopting a plan foredoomed to failure because it is not God's. This is not in the least an argument for keeping things as they are, or merely letting them drift. But it is an argument against changes which are out of line with God's plan, since they are out of line with the nature He has given us. Our job is to bring about the changes that really match God's purposes for our race. . . . When we look back over history, we find that the men who created really *new* orders, and not just a rehash of the old, were always men who walked in the light of the Four Last Things, and often men who thought the End of the World was close at hand. If we want a genuinely new order, and not simply a reshuffle of old mistakes, we should lay to heart what the Bible has to say about the last phase of human history. For it sheds a bright light on all history, especially upon its hours of crisis.

**FOURTH WEEK.** St. Paul was obviously the right man for this Jew-Gentile question which so puzzled the early Church. As to what fitted him to be the Apostle of the Gentiles—which included working out the terms on which they could be admitted to full membership in Christ's religion—the chief points are these:

(a) His character, with its zeal, energy, sincerity, fidelity, gift of leadership, organizing ability, power both of feeling and of winning affection.

(b) His experience of all three sides of the quarrel, for he was by birth a Jew of the Dispersion, by education a strict Jew of Palestine, and by experience a man of many Gentile friendships.

(c) His intelligence—he had the kind of mind which can wrestle with a problem until it yields up its secrets.

(d) His education in the Scriptures and traditions of the Jews. This gave him the needful starting-point for becoming the first Christian theologian. His mind did not operate "in the air;" from the start he had a concrete problem to work out—how the new revelation stood to the old revelation given by the same God. Thanks to his education, he had the

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facts about the old revelation in his possession. Given the further fact of God-made-Man, his solution was able to grow straight out of the facts of the case, particularly out of his Christology.

(e) His Roman citizenship, which gave him a privileged position, the right to a hearing and a trial before the Roman authorities if his conduct were ever seriously called in question. Thus he was not at the mercy of Jewish national prejudice, but could win a breathing-space not so much for himself as for his cause.

(f) He had a marked "eye for country." A map showing the Roman roads and trade routes of the ancient world shows too that he drifted on no haphazard course, but followed a strategy worthy of a great general.

(g) Above all, he was most human, understanding the weaknesses of men as well as their strength, with fellow-feeling for the humblest, dullest and most tempted, not only for the brilliant, well-balanced and well-endowed.

**FIFTH WEEK.** The great advantage of the Epistle method is that Christian theology was started off, not as theorizing about what might be, but as describing what is. The new Kingdom of God, opened to us by faith in Christ, is something absolutely concrete and real. It is not a set of ideas inside our heads, but a new country, so to speak, in which we lead a new kind of life. That country and that life are the things that come first; the attempt to describe them comes second. That is why theology is a science—it is a description of something there already. The danger always is lest a thinker, instead of describing accurately what exists already, should start theorizing about what might exist. For revealed religion is a territory in which people live, even before it is accurately described, just as people drank water, and washed and swam in it, for centuries before scientists analysed it into H<sub>2</sub>O. That is why every advance in theology has always sprung out of a definite situation. Something had to happen first, and so get itself noticed, before the theologians could study it. St. Paul's Epistles are the first examples of this,

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the constant method of Catholic theology. They are his response to things that had actually happened; and those things helped him to say clearly what the life of Christ's Kingdom really is.

Another point is this. The new Kingdom of God moved at into the world to take possession of it in the name of God. It could do so because the world already belonged by right to God. He had created it, and every scrap of good in it came from Him. Yet much of evil was also present, because God's world had revolted against Him. Hence revealed religion has two conflicts to cope with: the old, old struggle within man himself, the conflict of good and evil which goes on in every human being; and at the same time a whole world of new tensions, frictions and confusions, due to the fact that a new Divine order is seeking to make junction with the old, good gifts of God already present in human nature. It is not only that what is bad in man resists grace; what is good in him by nature, by the Divine act of creation, does not, in our fallen state, immediately see how to join up with grace. Theology thus has a double task. It has to describe how grace corrects what is bad in man; and also how it rescues, strengthens and perfects what he has of good.

Here again, it always takes some sort of emergency to give theology a chance to describe accurately. St. Paul's Epistles were all drawn from him by emergencies; it is this which gives them their amazing actuality. Once we know what the emergency was, we instantly feel the pulsating life in his thought. And whenever theology has been fruitful, it is because it has been faithful to St. Paul: it has taken its start from a concrete situation, something which has actually happened and which needs to be studied until it can be correctly described.

**NINTH WEEK.** Read a life of St. Paul, to fill in his later history.

**TENTH WEEK.** 1. *St. Luke's experience as a doctor* leaves the following traces in especial. (a) Sometimes he is found using technical medical terms. This is of course more evident



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in the Greek, where "a great fever" (Luke iv. 38) and "full of leprosy" (v. 12) are terms found in medical textbooks of the period. (b) His medical training made him accurate and observant. (c) It gave him opportunities to know more of women than was common among men at that period. (d) It gave him what might be called a professional interest in miracle; he liked to know as exactly as possible what was the disease that was healed. Sometimes modern doctors can recognize from his account a condition with which they are familiar, e.g. Acts iii. 7. St. Luke would have been a very useful member of the Medical Bureau at Lourdes, where his statue so fittingly stands above the door.

One might add, he had a nice sense of professional loyalty. St. Mark, describing the cure of the woman who touched Our Lord in the crowd, says she "had suffered many things from many physicians and had spent all that she had, and was nothing the better, but rather worse" (v. 26). St. Luke, retelling the story (viii. 43) considerably softens the remark. It is a poor practitioner who willingly crabs his brethren of the craft.

And of course St. Luke owed his long association with St. Paul to his being a doctor, for he seems to have been St. Paul's personal medical attendant. It was this that gave him such wonderful chances of being "in the know" about the development of early Christianity. His power of accurate observation, and his masterly style and skill in presentation, make him one of the outstanding historians of his age.

2. *St. Luke's character.* The mere fact that St. Luke keeps himself so constantly out of sight tells us something about him; it is from St. Paul that we get our glimpses of his wonderful devotion and fidelity. His own humility hides this from all but a fairly close scrutiny. "Only Luke is with me," writes St. Paul from his last prison, to Timothy who longed to be there. And there is a hint that others had been less faithful. St. Luke's moral worth is not displayed on his sleeve.

His intellectual characteristics, however, cannot be hidden in the same way, for they are interwoven with the texture of

his writings. St. Luke very remarkably combined scientific with artistic ability. The factor common to both is power of accurate observation; but it is the artist who knows how to set out his observations in telling fashion. This unflagging accuracy of St. Luke, which has been checked in detail, especially over his journeyings in Asia Minor with St. Paul, has given him a high reputation among modern scholars. It springs from a mind essentially truth-loving, ready to take endless trouble to disentangle truth from mere gossip.

I think too we can safely say that St. Luke had a sense of humour, more so than any other New Testament writer. (Though I have been told that some passages of St. Paul, which in English sound angry, are in Greek the most delightful *fun*.) In St. Luke's Gospel, of course, the honours in wit, humour and playfulness go to Our Lord. Imagine hearing the saying about the mote and the beam for the first time! (Matt. vii. 3-5; Luke vi. 41-2.) In Acts we get the play of St. Luke's own mind. St. Peter's deliverance from prison is exquisite comedy. An instance less easy perhaps to see, since it depends rather more on habits and manners no longer in use, is the scene in Acts xxii. 23-30, where St. Paul was nearly scourged. As the scourging did not come off, it must have been shatteringly funny to anyone who knew what being a Roman citizen meant. Hence the terror of the torturers at finding what they had almost done, and the dismay of the tribune (lieutenant-colonel, more or less) who had purchased his citizenship, on finding that this tatterdemalion shrimp of a man was born free. There is a deliciously sly understatement in the remark that "immediately they departed from him that were about to torture him"—they probably darted round the nearest corner in order to avoid being mixed up in a nasty business. St. Paul could have had Claudius Lysias dismissed the army if he had chosen; and there would have been unpleasant consequences for others as well. That being so, the Tribune's letter in the next chapter is a piece of high comedy—to St. Luke, not to Claudius Lysias, who was engaged in wriggling out of a hole. Think how blandly he leaves out the thing that was really worrying him. . . . There

are other places where one can overhear a subdued chuckle in St. Luke's voice: "the greater part knew not for what cause they were come together" (Acts xix. 32); "undoubtedly this man is a murderer . . . they said that he was a god" (xxviii. 4-6).

**ELEVENTH WEEK.** *The Influence of St. Paul on St. Luke.* Where two men of strongly marked but widely different temperament are bound together in friendship, the influence of one on the other does not involve any blurring of individual characteristics. Hence we find St. Luke preserving his own highly independent personality, looking at the world through his own keen, humorous eyes. Yet we find him, in his Gospel, distinctly interested in tracing out those elements in the acts and words of Our Lord which form the basis of St. Paul's universalism. A useful short classification can be found in St. Paul's own summary: "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 28).

*Neither Jew nor Greek.* We find St. Luke giving space to incidents which show Our Lord overstepping the frontiers of Jewish national prejudice, noticeably in His treatment of the Samaritans. There is also a fondness for Old Testament quotations showing that the Gentiles had a place in God's purposes of mercy. And it is St. Luke who gives us the Song of Simeon, praising God for His salvation "which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples: A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel" (Luke ii. 31-2).

Here we also have a complementary characteristic. St. Luke also has St. Paul's tenderness towards the Jews, his grief at their hardness and their final rejection. The parable of the Barren Figtree sums up St. Paul's own feelings of intense regret. And St. Luke, reporting Our Lord's lament over Jerusalem, stresses His anguish at the doom the people were bringing on themselves. St. Matthew and St. John are both far more severe towards the Jews.

Yet St. Luke had in no way a "one-track mind." He omits the story of the Syro-Phenician woman, for instance, whose story is told both by St. Matthew and St. Mark. (Matt. xv. 22; Mark vii. 26.) And it is St. Matthew who gives us the story of the Magi, in which the Church has always seen the Epiphany (Manifestation) of Christ to the Gentiles. While each Evangelist has a standpoint of his own, and emphasizes what suits his own particular purpose, all are drawing from the same fountain of living waters.

And St. Luke gives the two parables—the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan—which have for one of their meanings the free admission of the Gentiles to the Kingdom of Christ. Of course each has also a direct human moral, so plain that no one has ever felt the want of an interpretation. Yet there is a second interpretation. In the one case, the Prodigal is the Gentiles, the Elder Brother stands for the Jews; and the moral is St. Paul's favourite one, that God receives both His sons on the same terms, and that the one who was priggish and servile had really injured his father as much as the one who wasted his property. In the other, the oldest interpretation is that the man who fell among thieves is Man-kind, the human race itself fallen in Adam; the priest and Levite represent the powerlessness of the Law to heal his wounds—a favourite idea of St. Paul's; while the Samaritan is Our Lord Himself, the inn is the Church, and the innkeeper St. Peter. . . . It would be difficult to imagine a more telling summary of St. Paul's pet points.

*There is neither Bond nor Free.* St. Luke's Gospel does not directly touch on the issue of slavery, but his is the Gospel both of poverty and of repentance. Not of course that poor people are worse than rich ones (St. Luke is at pains to stress Our Lord's criticism of the wealthy); but members of "depressed classes" the world over are apt to be driven to actions for which the more fortunate hold them in contempt.

It is possible that St. Luke's "slant" on the whole question came from seeing the power of the Gospel to set on their feet those who had gone morally to bits. There were plenty

of decent pagans; St. Luke one feels had always been a man of decent life. But this pagan decency was very largely a matter of decent environment; a kindly household, with enough to live on and no very urgent frictions between its members, might keep up a very respectable standard. Of those pushed "over the edge" into the gulf of disreputableness, such decent pagans washed their hands. Christians did not. St. Luke must have seen a good deal of this as he went round with St. Paul (and anyone intelligently interested in the healing of the body is readily interested in the far more difficult healing of the soul). Not that the reinstatement was always effected in one day; the sins St. Paul had to rebuke in his converts are evidence of the difficulty many found in ridding themselves of ingrained bad habits. Possibly St. Paul had been criticized for his patience with these weaklings, and so St. Luke is concerned to stress those of Our Lord's actions which provide the sanction for St. Paul. It is St. Luke who gives us the story of the woman who was a sinner (probably Mary Magdalen), and of the Good Thief. He has many compassionate references to "publicans and sinners," and it is he who gives us the great parables of conversion, the Good Samaritan and Prodigal Son (for this is as much a real meaning as the one we discussed before).

But to grasp all this is to be confronted with something more: the snag in the kind of decency which comes from a decent environment. Such an environment may protect from the obviously disreputable sins. But it is in itself a temptation to other, less obvious, sins: to hardness of heart (Dives and Lazarus); to forgetfulness of the true end of life (the Rich Fool). St. Luke seems to have been deeply impressed by Our Lord's condemnation of wealth, for this is an element which he especially underlines. . . . Only underlines, for of course other Evangelists tell us the same, though with less emphasis. It is for instance St. Matthew, not St. Luke, who gives us the story of the Rich Young Ruler.

So we come to the positive conclusion: if riches are bad for us, poverty must be good. Certainly St. Luke's is supremely the Gospel of Poverty. Where St. Matthew says, "Blessed

are the poor in spirit" (v. 3), St. Luke says without qualification, "Blessed are ye poor" (vi. 20). In the story of the Great Supper he rounds out St. Matthew's version with a little bit all his own: "Bring in hither the poor, and the feeble, and the blind, and the lame" (xiv. 21). It is he who tells us of the Ministering Women (viii. 2-3) as if to emphasize that Our Lord had nothing of His own. Perhaps this was in part a hint to those who had criticized St. Paul for similarly accepting support from a lady, as other Apostles also did; apparently to do so was a privilege of the Apostolic office. (1 Cor. ix. 5-6.) Above all there is the stress on the poverty of the Holy Family. The preaching of the Gospel to the poor and downtrodden seems to have been the "sign of the kingdom" which most came home to St. Luke (vii. 22). I should not wonder if St. Luke were St. James's favourite Gospel; he had the same feeling himself about riches and poverty. (Jas. ii and v.)

*Neither Male nor Female.* If we left out St. Luke's two books, we should know very much less about the part played by women in the life of the infant Church. He gives us a whole series of thumbnail sketches, apparently slight, but which make up a remarkable gallery of well-differentiated portraits. In Acts we have Mary the mother of Mark, Dorcas (Tabitha), Rhode, Lydia, and Priscilla who seems to have taken the lead in instructing Apollo. While in his Gospel we have, besides Our Lady, Elisabeth, Anna, Martha and her sister Mary. (This is in all probability Mary Magdalen, though not one of the Evangelists makes the identification. For that matter, none says anything about Mary Magdalen's past, save that Our Lord had cast out seven unclean spirits from her.) And it is St. Luke who tells us of the Ministering Women, the widow of Naim, the woman who had been bent double eighteen years (xiii. 11-16), and the widow's mite.

Of course his being a doctor gave St. Luke exceptional chances to make the acquaintance of women; hence in one way this interest is personal to St. Luke. Yet it is also a point of contact with St. Paul, who clearly had a huge circle

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of women friends. The mere fact that he had to make regulations about women's behaviour at public worship shows how much energy and initiative they were showing in the churches he founded. The idea, common in some quarters, that St. Paul was a woman-hater, does not stand examination. His converts often had an environment of singularly nasty practices; and St. Paul was guided by the merest common sense in inculcating a very modest outward demeanour for the Christian woman. But the line he takes about virginity (1 Cor. vii) shows that he expected women to be capable of heroism, devotion and the fullest spiritual development; he put no barrier to their capacities in that direction. It is in fact those who misunderstand the celibate ideal who misunderstand St. Paul's attitude to women. But his friend St. Luke shared that ideal, as indeed all the first Christians did. It so happens that St. Luke does not directly refer to this particular form of asceticism; but the ascetic tone of his Gospel is remarked on by students of all schools of thought. And it is St. Luke who gives us, in the story of Martha and Mary, the incident which the Church has always regarded as the germinal seed of the contemplative life. In actual history this has, for the most part, gone hand in hand with the life of the Counsels.

**THIRTEENTH WEEK.** Besides St. Joseph's story of the Infancy, and the larger part of the Sermon on the Mount, Fr. Hugh Pope<sup>1</sup> gives the following list of passages peculiar to St. Matthew. Do not be depressed if you have not listed them all. It takes practice and experience to do this sort of work with exactness; if you have got from a third to a half in this first attempt you will have done well.

### *Miracles.*

The two blind men. ix. 27-31.

The finding of the stater. xvii. 24-7.

The healing of the man blind and dumb. xii. 22-3.

St. Peter walking on the water. xiv. 28-33.

<sup>1</sup> In *The Catholic Student's "Aids" to the Study of the Bible*, vol. ii, The Gospels, pp. 192-3.

## ANSWERS

### *Parables.*

- The cockle. xiii. 24-30.
- The treasure. xiii. 44.
- The pearl. xiii. 45-6.
- The draw-net. xiii. 47-50.
- The unmerciful servant. xviii. 23-35.
- The labourers in the vineyard. xx. 1-16.
- The two sons. xxi. 28-32.
- The wedding feast of the king's son. xxii. 1-14.
- The ten virgins. xxv. 1-13.
- The ten talents. xxv. 14-30.

### *Various Discourses of Our Lord.*

- The greater portion of the Sermon on the Mount. v-vii.
- Come to Me all ye that labour . . . xi. 28-30.
- Every idle word . . . xii. 36-7.
- Thou art Peter . . . xvi. 17-19.
- The denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees as a connected account. xxiii.
- The description of the last judgment. xxv. 31-46.
- The final commission to the Apostles. xxviii. 18-20.

### *Historical Portions found only in St. Matthew.*

- Practically the whole narrative of the Infancy. i-ii.
- That the Pharisees and the Sadducees had some of them been baptized by John. iii. 7.
- Judas's compact for thirty pieces of silver. xxvi. 14-16.
- The dream of Pilate's wife. xxvii. 19.
- The apparition of the saints. xxvii. 52.
- The narrative of the guards at the Sepulchre. xxvii. 62-6.
- Their bribe to secure silence. xxviii. 11-15.
- The earthquake. xxviii. 2.

**SEVENTEENTH WEEK.** The connection between St. Paul's high mystical doctrine and our daily conduct obviously pervades this Epistle. The material could be arranged in several ways. Do not be afraid to use your own order and your own words. But the following points, however differently expressed, should come in somewhere.

1. St. Paul makes it very clear that none of his moral programme is possible through our own efforts. The very power to try is a fruit of our union with Christ. The point is even more plainly put in the next Epistle (Phil. ii. 12-13). We can



only "put off the old man" according as we are "renewed in the spirit of our mind"; and this change is of so fundamental a character that he calls it "putting on the new man" (Eph. iv. 22-4). It is this "new man" who alone can "walk worthy of the vocation in which we are called" (iv. 1), for this newness of life "in Christ" is that vocation.

2. This union with Christ is also a union with each other. We are all incorporated "in Him," and so joined to each other. It is as we act through "the unity of the Spirit" that we find ourselves caught up in the "bond of peace," and so become able to behave as befits our Christian profession.

3. This unity begins in our minds, which must be firmly anchored in true doctrine—note how many times St. Paul stresses "understanding." Yet the power to understand this true doctrine is itself a gift given us "in Christ." Only when we know the truth can we set about "doing the truth in love"—St. Paul's summary of the Christian way of behaving.

4. This programme embraces every aspect of conduct. No detail is too insignificant or too sordid to be brought into relation with our life as members of Christ's Mystical Body. In every kind of matter we are to be "followers of God as most dear children" (an echo surely of Matt. v. 48).

5. St. Paul's most striking application is to marriage. Indeed Eph. v. 22-33 is the fullest exposition of the Christian doctrine of marriage to be found in Holy Writ. St. Paul derives the relation of husband and wife direct from the relation of Christ to the Church, that intimate unbreakable union which he sees as the ground and spring of all Christian activity.

6. Unity is not dead-level uniformity. The unity of faith and love is the unity of a living organism, the Body of Christ; and an organism is a variety of living parts so harmoniously ordered as to be a unity. Christian unity is not a matter of all doing the same thing, but of each doing his different task so as to contribute to the harmony of the whole.

7. Besides difference of function within the Body of Christ there are different functions in natural human society. St. Paul names three: husband and wife, parents and children,

masters and slaves. All have complementary duties; in no case are the duties all on one side and the rights all on the other. From the point of view of pagan society this was revolutionary, especially in the case of women, children and slaves.

8. To go rather beyond this Epistle—this last principle can be extended to other relationships, such as ruler and ruled, buyer and seller, employer and employed, banker and borrower. The principle which St. Paul works out in domestic relationships is the principle which, transferred to the political and economic sphere, gives birth to Christian social order with its unique combination of justice and freedom.

**NINETEENTH WEEK.** The order followed in this book is a useful one for people living in the twentieth century, when the interest in development is so strong. The Church's order is a much better one (*a*) for all periods, and (*b*) for the permanent convenience of students. And yet, like so much in the story of the New Testament, this was brought about casually and by seeming accident. For the arrangement of books in the New Testament was largely due to a very commonplace consideration—their length! Scribes tended to begin with the longest book, partly because there was always a chance that it would be the most important as well. There were, however, other considerations. For instance, if there was any discussion about the Apostolic authorship of a book, that book would tend to fall to the end of its section in the New Testament. That is why the unsigned Epistle to the Hebrews stands last in the writings of St. Paul, in spite of both its length and its importance.

Now that you have some idea of the order in which the New Testament books were written, you will find no great difficulty in picturing the first Christians making collections of the writings of Apostles. After the actual writing, the next stage naturally was this making of collections. St. Paul's converts early began handing round his writings—indeed, as we saw in the case of Colossians, he himself advised them to do so. Naturally the earliest collection would contain his

earliest Epistles, the longest and fullest being copied first. This would give us Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, which were probably quickly in circulation among churches in easy reach of each other. Indeed, as St. Paul's letter-writing habits became known, it is possible that people begged to be allowed to take copies before the original was "posted," so to speak. This would give us the three Prison Epistles, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, the principle of putting the longest first once again bringing the most important to the first place in the group. The two Epistles to the Thessalonians, though written earliest of all, stand last, partly no doubt because they are short. But there may be other reasons. Thessalonica was somewhat off the beaten track, so that these Epistles may have become generally known rather later than the others. And by the time of the Apostle's death their subject matter may have begun to look a little old-fashioned; it may have been only the longing to collect every word from his pen which led to their inclusion. However it was, we may be thankful, for they are our chief light on a rather dim period of the Church's career. St. Paul's letters to individuals would then form a further natural group, and so would the letters of the other Apostles, St. Peter, St. James and St. Jude, who had also written before the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul in A.D. 67. It would be some years after this, say A.D. 70, before even the most important and central churches would be likely to possess a complete set of all these various letters. Possibly Hebrews became generally known only after the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, for there is a good deal to suggest that St. Paul and others wished to keep this move of his quiet, in order to avoid provoking further persecution of the much-tried Jewish Christians.

Before the death of St. Peter and St. Paul, three Gospels were in circulation. They naturally were collected, and with them the Book of Acts. Arranged in the order in which they were written, this would give Matthew, Mark, Luke, with Acts following straight on from St. Luke's Gospel. When then St. John began writing, about thirty years later, his works were simply fitted in where they seemed to belong. His Gos-

pel was placed directly after St. Luke's, even though this meant breaking the connection with Acts. His Epistles were added on at the end of the collection of Epistles, save for St. Jude's, which was thrust to the end by its smallness, and also because for a time its authenticity was disputed. The Apocalypse stood last of all, because here too its Apostolic authorship was challenged. The two criteria which a book had to pass, to be included in the Canon of Scripture, were (a) the author must be an Apostle or the companion of an Apostle, such as St. Mark and St. Luke; and (b) it must have been accepted as Scripture by the whole Church as soon as it got into circulation, and not merely by some local church. Indeed, the tendency was much more to challenge authentic books than to accept doubtful; the early Church had a strong critical sense, and accepted no book as Scripture without a thorough examination of its claims.

The final stage was the arranging of the various collections in a suitable order, and this gave us the New Testament as we now know it. The whole procedure was extremely natural, casual, almost haphazard. Yet the result has been an order which, for general purposes, cannot really be bettered. If you try to work out an improved order of your own you will acquire a very solid respect for the traditional order. In the case of the Apocalypse, what looks like a fantastic string of accidents has landed the book where it artistically belongs, at the close of the New Testament.

## APPENDIX B

### BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING

THE list that follows is intended to enable those who wish to go on to take the next step. Some standard works are included, but most of the space has been given to works of a fairly simple character. Children's books are not included, though some are excellent; and after consideration books published in America are also omitted, owing to the difficulty of obtaining them.

Even with books published in Great Britain it is not always possible to say whether they can still be had, or at what price. Those known to be Out of Print are marked o.o.p.; but these should be obtainable at any good Catholic library; e.t. means English Translation. Books by non-Catholics are marked \*. In a few cases short comments have been added.

#### I. STANDARD WORKS

Archbishop Goodier: *The Public Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. 2 vols. 25s.

*The Passion and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ*. 15s. Both Burns Oates and Washbourne.

Jules Lebreton, S.J.: *The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*. e.t. Burns Oates and Washbourne. 2 vols. 15s. each.

L. de Grandmaison: *Jesus Christ, His Person, His Message and His Credentials*. e.t. Sheed and Ward. Vols. 1 and 2 o.o.p. Vol. 3 17s. 6d.

M. J. Lagrange, O.P.: *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*. e.t. Burns Oates and Washbourne. 25s.

Fern and Prat, S.J.: *The Theology of St. Paul*. e.t. Burns Oates and Washbourne. 2 vols. 21s. each.

#### II. STAND-BYS

These are mainly useful for looking-up purposes, though it would be a great gain to work through some one of those listed.

## BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING

Archbishop Goodier: *The Bible for Every Day*. Burns Oates and Washbourne. o.o.p.

*The Layman's New Testament*. Ed. Rev. Hugh Pope, O.P. Sheed and Ward. Unfortunately o.o.p., but likely to be found in libraries. It gives the full New Testament text, with explanations on the same page.

*Scripture Manuals for Catholic Schools and Colleges*. Edited by Sidney Smith, S.J. Burns Oates and Washbourne.

Mark, 8s. 6d. John, 3s. Matthew, Luke and Acts all o.o.p.

*Catholic Scripture Manuals*. Ed. Madame Cecilia. Burns Oates and Washbourne.

Matthew, Mark, John, Acts, Atlas, all o.o.p.

*The Catholic Student's "Aids" to the Bible*. Rev. Hugh Pope, O.P. Vols. i, ii, iii, iv, v, all o.o.p. Burns Oates and Washbourne. (Nothing else so completely covers the ground. It is likely to be o.o.p. for a time, but could be found in libraries.)

*The Westminster Version of the Sacred Scriptures*. Ed. C. Lattey, S.J. and J. Keating, S.J. Vols. i, ii, iii, 10s. 6d. each. Vol. iv, 8s. 6d. Longmans. (A complete translation of the New Testament made from the Greek, with introductions and notes.)

The Cambridge Summer Schools series. Ed. C. Lattey, S.J. Burns Oates and Washbourne, usually 3s. 6d. each. See especially *The Religion of the New Testament* and *The New Testament*, both o.o.p. But there are also lectures in other volumes of the series.

Articles in the *Catholic Encyclopaedia*.

## III. THE NEXT STAGE FOR MOST OF US

### NEW TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

Mgr. Legendre: *The Cradle of the Bible*. (Geography.) e.t. Sands and Co. 3s. 6d.

\*Murray's Small Classical Atlas. Ed. G. B. Grundy. 2nd edition, 7s. 6d. Several maps can be bought separately, e.g. Asia Minor and Palestine, 2s. each.

\*H. B. Tristram: *The Natural History of the Bible*. S.P.C.K. o.o.p.

Canon J. P. Arendzen: *Men and Manners in the Days of Christ*. Sands. o.o.p.

P. F. Anson: *A Pilgrim Artist in Palestine*. Alexander Ouseley. 6s.

## APPENDIX B

- \*H. V. Morton: *In the Steps of the Master*. Methuen. 9s. 6d.  
*In the Steps of St. Paul*. Methuen. 9s. 6d.  
*Through Bible Lands*. Methuen. 9s. 6d.

The last deals with a later period than the New Testament, but has good descriptions of scenery. The first two bring together a considerable amount of information not easily found in small compass.

### HARMONIES OF THE GOSPELS

- A Catholic Harmony of the Gospels*. Adapted from Père Lagrange, O.P. by Mgr. Barton, D.D., L.S.S. Burns Oates and Washbourne. o.o.p. Specially recommended.  
 Archbishop Goodier: *The Word Incarnate*. Burns Oates and Washbourne. o.o.p.  
 J. M. Bover, S.J.: *Jesus the Messiah: The Four Gospels in One Narrative*. Herder. o.o.p.

### LIVES OF CHRIST

- Abbé Fouard: *The Christ, the Son of God*. e.t. Longmans. 6s.  
 Vincent McNabb, O.P.: *A Life of Our Lord*. Sheed and Ward. o.o.p.  
 \*Dorothy Sayers: *The Man Born to be King*. Gollancz. 10s. 6d.  
*The Greatest Drama Ever Staged*. Hodder and Stoughton. 6d.

### ST. PAUL

- Fouard: *St. Paul and His Missions*. e.t. Longmans. o.o.p.  
*The Last Years of St. Paul*. e.t. Longmans. o.o.p.  
 Tricot: *St. Paul, Apostle of the Gentiles*. e.t. Sands. o.o.p. (The Catholic Library of Religious Knowledge.)  
 Prat: *St. Paul*. (The Saints Series.) e.t. Burns Oates and Washbourne. o.o.p.  
 Martindale: *St. Paul*. Burns Oates and Washbourne. o.o.p.

### OTHER NEW TESTAMENT CHARACTERS

- Fouard: *St. Peter and the First Years of Christianity*. e.t. Longmans. o.o.p.  
*St. John and the Close of the Apostolic Age*. e.t. Longmans. o.o.p.  
 Vincent McNabb, O.P.: *The New Testament Witness to St. Peter*. Sheed and Ward. 6s.  
*The New Testament Witness to Our Lady*. Sheed and Ward. 4s. 6d.

## BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING

### THE PARABLES

J. M. Ollivier, O.P.: *The Parables of Our Lord.* e.t. Brown and Nolan, Dublin. New Edition. 10s. 6d.

Rev. B. W. Maturin: *Practical Studies in the Parables of Our Lord.* Longmans. o.o.p.

### DEVOTIONAL

Abbot Marmion, O.S.B.: *Christ the Life of the Soul.* Sands, 10s. 6d.  
*Christ in His Mysteries.* Sands, 10s. 6d.

J. Duperray: *Christ in the Christian Life, according to St. Paul.* e.t. Ed. J. J. Burke. Longmans. o.o.p.



# APPENDIX C

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE following is a selection from the Table of Dates appended to the Book of Acts in the *Westminster Version*, vol. ii, by kind permission of the Rev. C. Lattcy, S.J.

Scripture references are all to Acts unless otherwise stated.

- B.C. 8. Nativity.
- 3. Return from Egypt.
- A.D. 29. Public Ministry begins.
- 33. Crucifixion.
- 36. Death of Stephen. First general persecution (vi. 8-viii. 3).  
*Conversion of St. Paul: Damascus, Arabia, back to Damascus* (ix. 1-25; Gal. i. 17).
- 38. Paul with Peter at Jerusalem (first visit).  
*Tarsus* (ix. 26-30; xxii. 17-21; Gal. i. 18-21).
- 43. Death of James, brother of John. Barnabas brings Paul from Tarsus to Antioch. (xi. 25-6).
- 44. Famine under Claudius (xi. 28). Paul's second visit to Jerusalem, from Antioch (xi. 30). Death of Herod Agrippa I (xii. 28).
- 45. Paul's return to Antioch (xii. 25).
- 47 (spring)-48 (autumn). *First Missionary Journey* (xiii-xiv).  
*Cyprus and Galatia.*
- 48-9. Winter at Antioch (xiv. 28).
- 49. Council of Jerusalem: Paul's third visit (xv. 1-29; Gal. ii. 1-10). Antioch (xv. 35).  
*Incident with Peter* (Gal. ii. 11-14).
- 49-52. *Second Missionary Journey* (xv. 36-xviii. 22): Syria and Cilicia, Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and back by sea to Antioch.
- 49-50. Winter in Galatia (xvi. 5).
- 50-2. *Corinth* for winters of 50-1 and 51-2 (18 months: xviii. 11).
- 50. 1-2 *Thessalonians* from Corinth.

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

51. Gallio enters upon office as proconsul of Achaia about midsummer.
52. Paul leaves Corinth (xviii. 12-18). Fourth visit to Jerusalem (for Pentecost?) thence to Antioch (xviii. 22-8).
- 52-6. *Third Missionary Journey* (xviii. 23-xxi. 17): Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, Achaia, Macedonia again, and by sea to Jerusalem (fifth visit).
- 52-5. *Ephesus* for winters of 52-3, 53-4, 54-5 (2 years 3 months: xix. 8-10; cf. xx. 31).
55. 1 *Corinthians* from Ephesus (1 Cor. xvi. 8).  
2 *Corinthians* from Macedonia (2 Cor. ii. 12-13; vii-viii).
- 55-6. Winter in Greece, probably Corinth (3 months: xx. 3).
56. *Galatians* and *Romans* from Corinth.  
Jerusalem (fifth visit: arrest).
- 56-8. Caesarea (in captivity: xxiv. 27).
- 58-9. Winter in Malta (3 months: xxviii. 11).
- 59-61. First Roman Captivity (xxviii. 30).  
61. *Epistles of Captivity. Hebrews* (?).  
62. *Epistle of James* (?); death of James (?); *Acts*.
- 62-3. Spain? (Rom. xv. 24).  
63 (?). 1 *Peter* and *Jude*.
64. Great fire at Rome: Nero's persecution.
- 64-6 (?). *Fourth Missionary Journey*.  
65. 2 *Peter* (?), *Titus* and 1 *Timothy*, both from Macedonia (Tit. iii. 12; 1 Tim. i. 3)?
- 65-6. Winter at Nicopolis (Tit. iii. 12)?
- 66-7 (?). Second Roman Captivity.  
67 (?). 2 *Timothy* from Rome. Death of SS. Peter and Paul.
70. Destruction of Jerusalem.
- 80 (?). *Gospel and Epistles of St. John*.
- 95 (?). *Apocalypse*.

## REMARKS

1. Notice how much more uncertain the dating becomes after the period covered by the *Book of Acts* (written about A.D. 62).
2. Other dates preferred by other contributors to the *Westminster Version* are these:  
A.D. 49: *Galatians*.  
A.D. 100-102: *St. John's Gospel and Epistles*.

## APPENDIX C

### 8. *The Synoptic Gospels:*

*St. Matthew* was probably in circulation within thirteen years of the Ascension, in Aramaic; the date of the Greek translation is unknown but lies in the first century.

*St. Mark* was probably in circulation before A.D. 60.

*St. Luke* was probably written in A.D. 61, immediately before *Acts* in the following year.

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